

THE DESIRE OF LIFE
(EVVIVA LA VITA)

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Matilde Serao

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THE DESIRE OF LIFE

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"AFTER THE PARDON,"
"THE CONQUEST OF ROME," ETC.

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**LONDON : GREENING & CO.
NEW YORK : BRENTANO'S
1922**

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

THE DESIRE OF LIFE

CHAPTER I

"How light it is still!" said Don Vittorio Lante, after a long silence.

"Evening falls much later among the high mountains," suggested Lucio Sabini.

The great vault of the sky was ascending, as they were ascending, from the level of the Val Bregaglia; it passed over their heads and kept rising, as their eyes contemplated it quietly, amongst the steep mountain peaks, now quite green with trees and bushes, now bare and rugged; rising so immensely towards the horizon, as if they should not perceive its descending curve. It was the sky of an uncertain summer day that during the afternoon had been softly blue, veiled by transparent clouds, but now had become a very light grey, of great purity and clearness.

"It is eight o'clock," exclaimed Don Vittorio Lante, pursuing his quiet thoughts.

"Eight o'clock," affirmed Lucio Sabini slowly.

The bells of their horses tinkled faintly in their tranquil ascent; the torrent on their right, at times violent and covered with the foam whitening on its rocks, at times clear and narrow like a brook amidst green meadows, rumbled noisily and softly as it descended from the white and cold summits whither they were ascending, on its way to the warm and monotonous plains whence they had come.

"We shall not arrive before half-past eleven," said Vittorio Lante, in a low voice.

"Not before," affirmed Lucio Sabini, in the same tone. Both were smoking cigarettes: fine smoke shadows, not clouds, scarcely floated round their faces, as their carriage continued to ascend, to the calm and regular paces of the horses, along the accustomed road, the long road that climbs, amidst a continual renewing of small and large valleys, of narrow gorges, and vast stretches, between the two mountain sides on right and left. At Chiavenna they found that the diligence had left, owing to a change in the time-table from the previous year, and for five hours a hired carriage had been conveying them towards the austere Grissons, whose outposts were not yet distinguishable.

"What does it matter?" said Vittorio Lante, still continuing his thought aloud. "It is better to arrive late at St. Moritz than lose a night at Chiavenna."

"Or at Vicosoprano," concluded Lucio Sabini, throwing away the end of his cigarette.

Both gentlemen settled themselves better in their places, and drew the large English travelling-rug over their limbs, with the quiet gestures of those who are used to long journeys. Just an hour ago they had halted at Vicosoprano to rest their horses, since they could not obtain a change: they arrived at six and left at seven. After giving a glance at the new, white, and melancholy Hôtel Helvetia, where, in a small meadow in front of the hotel, and around its peristyle, male and female figures moved about aimlessly, dressed indifferently, with the insignificant and bored faces of those who are used to sojourning at solitary pensions on seven francs a day, and while the annoying bell of the round table of the "Helvetia" was dinning in their ears, they descended at the old rustic inn, "The Crown." Round the arch of the low and broad Swiss doorway ran a motto

in Gothic characters, and the small central balcony had four or five little bright geranium plants and purple gentians : a resounding and black wooden staircase led to the first floor. The innkeeper's blond and florid daughter, with heightened colour, had served them rapidly and silently with a simple and characteristic dinner : to wit, a thick and steaming vegetable soup, trout in butter, roast fowl, and lastly, English sponge cake, with acid and fresh gooseberry jam. At the door, as they were getting into their carriage to set out again, a very blond Swiss maiden offered them little bunches of cyclamen, which they still wore, although they were already slightly faded.

"Are you going to stop long up there, Vittorio ?" asked Lucio Sabini, in a discreet tone. :

"Three or four weeks, no longer ; and you, Lucio ?"

"I don't know ; the same I think ; I don't know exactly." And a slight smile, mingled with doubt, annoyance, and bitterness, appeared and disappeared about his lips. Even the face of his travelling companion became thoughtful.

Don Vittorio Lante was fair with thick and shining chestnut hair, chestnut eyes, now soft and now proud, but always expressive, and fair, curled moustaches. His features were fine and he seemed much younger than his thirty years ; the complexion was delicate but vivacious. On the other hand, Lucio Sabini at thirty-five was distinctly dark, with black eyes, calm and thoughtful, pale complexion, very black hair and moustaches, while he was tall and thin of figure. Vittorio Lante was of medium height, but well made and agile. Both were wrapped in thought, and they no longer smoked. Some time passed ; suddenly something far on high gleamed whitely amidst the increasing shadows.

"It is the glacier," said Lucio Sabini ; "the Forno Glacier." And as if that whiteness, already expanding

in the night at the edge of the Val Bregaglia, had sent them an icy blast, they wrapped the rug closer round them, and hid their gloved hands under its covering.

"Do you expect to amuse yourself in the Engadine, Lucio?" asked Vittorio.

"Of course, I am sure to amuse myself very much, as I do every year."

"Leading a fashionable life?"

"No, making love."

"Have you come to the Engadine to love and to be loved, Lucio?"

"Oh, no," exclaimed the other, with a gentle movement of impatience and an ironical little smile. "I never said that: I said that I go to St. Moritz, as I do every year, to make love."

"That is to say—to flirt."

"Exactly: you say the English word, I the Italian."

Suddenly the whiteness that crowned Monte Forno seemed as if it had been extended to the sky, rendering it more vast; it was a great white cloud, soft and clear, since it preceded the moon. All the country changed its aspect. Before them stood out the great, green wall of trees, with almost the appearance of a peak, which separates the Engadine from the Val Bregaglia. Beneath the appearing and disappearing lunar brightness, behind the white cloud, a sinuous spiral disclosed itself amidst the wood like a soft ribbon that came and went, but ever climbed—the road which leads to the hill of the Maloja. Meanwhile, the carriage, reducing its pace, entered the first bend of the winding way; the clouds continued to increase, and there was a continuous alternating of light and shade, according as they conquered the moon or were conquered by her.

"You like flirting, Lucio?"

"Very much," replied the other, with an intense smile; "and this is an ideal country for love-making, Vittorio."

"I know it is. And do you sometimes grow fond of each other?"

"Sometimes I grow fond of them."

"And, perhaps, sometimes you fall in love?"

"One is always a little in love with the person to whom one makes love," said Lucio Sabini, in a low voice.

"But do you fall in love?" insisted Vittorio.

"Yes, I fall in love, too," Lucio confessed.

"And then? What do you do to cure yourself?" asked Vittorio Lante, with affectionate curiosity; "because you do cure yourself, don't you?"

"I keep on curing myself," replied the other sadly, regarding the clouds that were heaping above, as they became less white, obscuring and hiding all the light of the moon. "I cure myself of myself. And if I do not there is somebody who sees to curing me."

Suddenly it seemed as if a boundless sadness was emanating from what Lucio Sabini was saying and thinking, from what he was not saying and thinking. His head was slightly bowed, and his lowered lashes hid his glance.

"Then you are allowed to come to St. Moritz?" Vittorio asked in a low voice, as if he were afraid of being indiscreet.

"I am allowed to come," Lucio replied rather bitterly. "We can't travel together in summer; some family *convenances* must be obeyed, certain canons have to be observed—there are so many things, Vittorio! Well, I have two months of liberty, two beautiful months you understand, two long months; sixty times twenty-four hours in which I am free, in which I delude myself and believe I am free—I am free!"

At first his words came sadly, then with increasing violence, while the last words sounded like a cry of revolt from a heart oppressed by its slavery.

"Still, she loves you," said Vittorio sweetly, in a subdued tone.

"Yes, she loves me," admitted Lucio quietly.

"For some time, I think."

"For an eternity, for ten years."

Lucio Sabini in the gloaming looked fixedly at his companion; then without bitterness, without joy, he added in an expressionless voice:

"I love her."

Very slowly, to the soft and gentle tinkling of the horses' bells, the carriage traversed the tortuous road, through the wood and past some majestic walls, and, like a vision, the small castle of Renesse appeared on high, now to the right and now to the left. The air continued to grow colder. The coachman on the box seemed to be asleep or dreaming, as he drove his horses, with bent shoulders and bowed head; even the two horses seemed to be asleep or dreaming of the ascent to the Maloja, as they tinkled their bells. And in a dream firmament the clouds galloped bizarrely, as they were scattered by the wind, which up above must be blowing strongly.

"There is nothing more delightful or pleasing than to make love to these foreigners," resumed Lucio, in a light tone, but with a slight shade of emotion; "there are some adorable little women, and girls especially. Some of them are very fashionable and complex, others are simple and frank; but some are very inquisitive and quite distrustful of all Italians."

"How's that?" asked Vittorio Lante, not without anxiety.

"We Italians have a very bad reputation," Lucio replied calmly, as he lit a cigarette. "They obstinately

believe us to be liars and inconstant in love affairs. *Actors* is the defensive word of these foreign women. But all the same they allow themselves to be attracted equally by our charm—because the men of their races do not trouble themselves to be charming—and by our ardour, assumed or real—because they never see their men ardent—and also by a certain invincible poetry that surrounds our country and ourselves."

"So an Italian can please and conquer mightily up there?"

"Very much so," replied Lucio serenely.

"And conquer seriously?" again added Vittorio.

"Seriously, no," answered Lucio. "We must not deceive ourselves; our attractions are for the most part of brief duration. When August is over at St. Moritz, to pass the first long week of September together at Lucerne, afterwards a few days in Paris—that suffices!"

"They forget?"

"They forget; our fascination comes from our presence. At a distance the lover dwindles: their English and Austrians, their Americans and Russians take them back—and all is over. A post card or two with a poetical motto; then nothing more."

"But if they don't forget?"

"That is seldom," murmured Lucio thoughtfully; "but it does happen. A Viennese, fair, slim, and most sympathetic . . . two years ago . . . she still remembers me."

"She hoped? She hopes?"

"She hoped; she hopes," replied Lucio thoughtfully.

"She didn't know . . .?"

"She knew nothing: the dear creatures never know anything: I try to make them know nothing."

"They think you free?"

"Most free."

"You deceive them?"

"I do not deceive them; I am silent"—and he smiled slowly.

"And what if one of them, more passionate, were to fall in love with you, and you seriously with her, Lucio?"

"That would be very serious indeed," murmured Lucio sadly.

"In fact, you are bound for ever, Lucio?" asked Vittorio, with melancholy.

"Yes; for ever," he affirmed, with that inexpressive voice of his, as if declaring an irrefutable fact.

A great gust of icy wind caught them, causing them to shudder and tremble with the cold. The great wall was passed, still a few minutes more and they would find themselves at the hill of the Maloja. The sky was quite white with little white clouds on one side, because the moon was passing behind them, while about the Margna—the great mountain with twin peaks nearly always covered with snow—the clouds had become black and threatening with rain and storm.

"Vittorio, Vittorio," exclaimed Lucio Sabini, in an altered voice; "adultery is a land of madness, of slavery and death. Don't give your youth and life to it as I have given mine, even to my last day. Beatrice and I have been intoxicated with happiness, but we are two unfortunates. I was twenty-five then, Vittorio, and she was three years older; but we never thought that we should throw away our every good, that is the one, the great, the only good—liberty! We are lost, Beatrice and I, in every way, both in our social life and in our consciences, not through remorse for our sin—no, for that was dear to us—but because of the ashes and poison it contains."

"Haven't you tried to free yourselves?" asked Vittorio timidly.

"I tried, but I was unsuccessful. Beatrice is older than I am," said Lucio gloomily, "and the idea of being left horrifies her."

"But she loves you, doesn't she? How can she see you unhappy?"

"Because she loved me, even she tried, the poor dear, to free me," Lucio Sabini resumed, with a voice almost oppressed with tears; "last year she wanted me to marry Bertha Meyer, the beautiful Viennese—an exquisite creature—but then she never succeeded. Poor, dear Beatrice! She suffered a thousand deaths. We suffered together. I love her tenderly, you understand; and, above all, I cannot see her suffer."

A sad and heavy silence fell upon the twain. Their teeth almost chattered from the severe cold which had surprised them, at that advanced hour of the evening on the high plain of the Maloja.

"Still," continued Lucio Sabini, "every now and then I feel my body, senses, and spirit weakened in this terrible slavery. Then, during these horrible crises, here and there I meet with other women, another woman—Bertha Meyer, who was so exquisite, or someone else—young, beautiful, free, with heart intact and fresh soul. In her come from afar, from countries which I know not, from a race that is foreign to me, I feel mysteriously the secret of my peace and repose, of the life that remains for me to live. Ah! what deep, what pungent nostalgia wounds me, Vittorio, through this fresh soul which has come to me from afar with all the gifts of existence in her white hands. I must let the white hands open, which I sadly repel, and allow the precious treasures they contain to fall—and all is lost."

"You make the renunciation?" asked Vittorio sadly.

"I make the renunciation," replied Lucio simply.

The immense and gloomy amphitheatre of the Maloja disclosed itself, stretched and prolonged itself in almost

incalculable distances before their eyes, through the singular light that came from the immense sky, traversed by thick clouds, now white, now grey, now black, through the whiteness that came from the snows gathered amidst the twin peaks of the colossal Margna, and through the snows of Monte Lunghino. The mountains hemmed in the amphitheatre in an embrace bristling with peaks, bare, sharp, and black, without the shade of trees or vegetation ; and on the rocks were tracks, yellowish and whitish tracks, not of paths but of rocky veins. All was rock from foot to summit ; rocks with angry, desperate, tragic profiles. Here and there on the level, browner shadows in the obscurity of the night, appeared three or four uninhabited *chalets*, without sound and without light ; but below, where the amphitheatre seemed to continue interminably, flickering lights in a row indicated a house, or rather a large edifice, where living beings were.

The deep and most extraordinary silence of the high land was uninterrupted by human sound or voice, only the violent gusts of wind produced a giant sigh and a dull rumbling. Suddenly the moon freed herself from the clouds and a spreading brightness was diffused on all the scene, rendering it less tragic, but not less sad. Even the wind and bare mountains, wrapped in cold and silvery light, preserved their disdainful and hopeless aspect, the aspect of rocks that have seen the ages without ever a blade of grass or a flower. Yet whiter seemed the snows of the Margna and the Lunghino ; and below, behind the glimmering light of the moon, scintillated like a great metal shield the lake of Sils. Now and then the night wind screeched in fury.

" Shall we close the carriage ? " Vittorio Lante asked.
" Are you cold ? "

" I am cold ; but unless you insist on it, I prefer not to close it. In a closed carriage time becomes eternal."

"Eternal ; that's true ! This is a long night."

"And the country is so desolate ! " said Lucio Sabini.

"But it doesn't matter ; you will have delightful evenings where you are going."

"And you will as well," murmured Vittorio Lante, with a smile.

"Are you going to flirt too ? "

"If there is nothing better to do," replied the other ambiguously.

"Better to do ? "

"Yes."

Now they had passed the Maloja Kursaal, that hotel of four hundred rooms, so isolated amidst the black and bare mountains, on a desert spot before a deserted and motionless lake. Some of the windows of the caravan-serai were illuminated, but no sound reached from them. They skirted the lake, where all the high shadows and the brightness of the sky were curiously reflected, as their tints changed from moment to moment.

"Do you want to get married, then ? " asked Lucio Sabini, scrutinising his friend's face, but with a kindly glance.

"I don't want to ; I must," replied Vittorio Lante, halting nervously at the second verb.

"You must ? "

"Ay," affirmed the other, shaking his shoulders and head, with the double gesture of one who is resigned to his destiny.

"And why rid yourself of that most precious benefit—liberty ? " murmured Lucio Sabini, seriously but benevolently.

"Because, dear Lucio," he replied, with a motion of familiarity and confidence, "I can do nothing with my liberty. What use would it be to me ? "

The other listened very intently, chewing his cigarette.

"Ah, what a weight—a great past, a great name !"

exclaimed Vittorio, as if he were speaking to himself, looking at the quiet, brown waters of the lake of Sils. "I am a Lante, but of the branch of La Scala; for three generations now the Lante della Scala have been ever declining as to fortune, power, and relationship, while the cousins, the Lante della Rovere, have not only kept, but have increased their fortunes, always allying themselves for the better with the most powerful, noblest, and richest families of Europe. My father was already poor when he had me, and I am thirty and very poor. I am not ashamed to tell you about it, who have known me for such a time and wish me well, and certainly sympathise with me."

A frank and almost ingenuous sorrow emanated from every word of the young man, and nothing base escaped from such a distressing acknowledgment as his own poverty.

"You would like to make a grand marriage?" asked Lucio Sabini, quite without irony.

"My mother, who loves and adores me and suffers from our decadence, wishes it. She desires, dreams of, and invokes millions and millions for her Vittorio, for the house of Lante della Scala, to restore the great palace at Terni, so as not to sell the park where they want to found a factory."

"St. Moritz is not lacking in youths who are on the look-out for a large dowry," said Lucio, thoughtfully and doubtfully.

"I know that," exclaimed Vittorio mournfully. "I know quite well that St. Moritz is a meeting-place of big and little dowry-hunters, from him who seeks two hundred thousand francs to him who seeks ten million. And I know that people recognise them and that very often they are adventurers. Nothing makes me shudder more, Lucio, than to be mistaken for them. I am not an adventurer. I am an unfortunate gentleman, whose lot it is to bear a great name without the means to sustain

it and who has not been taught how to work. I am a loving son, upon whom an adorable mother has imposed the duty of setting forth to try a conjugal adventure up there or somewhere, in homage to the lustre and claims of the Lante della Scala."

"If you dislike it so much, why attempt it? Why don't you convince your mother how much there is that is deplorable, and perhaps humiliating, in these adventures?"

"Because I would have to convince myself first," confessed Vittorio Lante sadly. "I, too, suffer from poverty; I, too, endure our slow agony; I, too, envy and almost hate my proud cousins—the *others*; I, too, keenly desire luxury and power. How is it to be helped? We have inherited souls, we have inherited nerves and feelings! Every now and then, through a feeling of personal dignity, I rebel against this dowry-hunting which I have been doing for two or three years; but directly afterwards obscurity and want inspire me with genuine horror. What a greedy man I must seem to you, Lucio! Still, I am a chivalrous man: I am a gentleman."

"I know others like you honourable and gentle and good, like you constrained by their destiny," observed Lucio Sabini, with tender sympathy.

Silently grateful, Vittorio Lante pressed his hand. As they proceeded the scene changed, and the views became more attractive. The big clouds had grown denser above their shoulders, towards the hill of the Maloja, which they had left some time, and the Val Bregaglia.

Denser they grew and gloomier, laden with the whirlwind of approaching night. The moon on high hung over the gentle bends of the lake of Sils.

Along the lake, full of deep nocturnal greens, which a band of light cut in the middle, ran banks quite green with large and small pines, and even on the travellers'

left, along the high mountain wall they were skirting, little meadows appeared and disappeared. Amidst the rocks, trees and shrubs reared themselves, and often the carriage-wheels beat down flowers from fragrant hedges.

"Ah, if I had another name and another soul," said Vittorio Lante, after a brief silence.

"What would you do?"

"I would be content with what I have. My mother and I between us have fifteen hundred lire a month: this will be left us after we have sold everything and paid our creditors. Fifteen hundred lire! With another name and another soul one could, to all appearance, live comfortably on this sum; and I could marry Livia Lante della Scala."

"A relation?"

"A cousin—so graceful, so sweet, and such a dear."

"Poor?"

"Even poorer than I am: not a penny—a great name, a great past, and not a pennyworth of dowry!"

"Does she love you?"

"She loves me quietly, in silence, without any hope. Ah, what a dear creature!"

He sighed deeply as he gazed below at the white, modest houses of Sils Maria amidst tall trees.

"Do you love her, Vittorio?"

"I am very fond of Livia, nothing more."

"Would you be happy with her?"

"Yes, if I were another man."

For a long stretch of road they said nothing more. By one of those very rapid changes, that in the high mountains astonish by their violence or their intense sweetness; the night sky had become as clear as crystal: the air had become so limpid that great distances could be clearly distinguished by the moon's rays. A rustling, cold, refreshing breeze came from afar, ruffling the waters of the lake;

but behind them, very far away, there was a mass of black clouds which they did not turn round to look at. On that summer night the noble, solitary mountains pencilled themselves in great precise lines, whose virgin snows threw a whiteness upon the lakes and the large woods and spinneys which skirted their waters, forming beneath the light of the moon many peninsulas and little promontories, and upon the immense meadows, where amidst the soft green grass coursed brooks and little torrents with gentle singing ; also upon the villages seized by slumber, with little barred windows upon whose sills tiny rose plants, geraniums, and gentians slept in floral slumber.

On high, amidst the dark green of the last spinney, the bright turrets of the Villa Storey pointed to the accomplishment of their journey. The two gentlemen, who had almost reached the end of their long drive, tired and bruised of limb, exalted by their deep, mutual striving, and by having confessed, almost unconsciously, how great was the pitiable and fatal essence of their lot, and exalted by a singular increase of their life, by the solemnity of the solitary night, the immense, austere, yet persuasive silence that surrounded them, by that pacifying light, and by the presence of a beauty—the simplicity and purity of which they perceived, almost without thinking about it—desired, yes, desired a new heart, a new soul, and another destiny. They desired that nothing of what had happened to them should happen again, that all the past should vanish, that everything should change—persons, sentiments, deeds. For an instant strongly did they desire this—for an instant !

The rocky banks of the Inn were in front of them, and their carriage bumped up and down on the small wooden bridge that spans the noisy little river at the entrance of St. Moritz Bad. Around them were little white houses ;

on the banks amidst the trees the church spires dominating the heights, and the imposing hotels upon which fluttered to the cold mountain breeze the red flag with white cross. Up above on a small hill was the village of St. Moritz Dorf, all white beneath the moon.

Every pure, fine, pious desire vanished in a trice. They remembered them no more and became the men of old, of always. Their nerves and senses were anxiously stretched out to pleasure, to luxury, to caprice ; and they were bitten by a pungent curiosity for new joys, new loves, new fantasies—to last an hour, a day, a month, then afterwards suddenly to be forgotten.

CHAPTER II

SMILING softly and showing her little flashing teeth, in a mouth as red as a carnation and whimsically opened, Mabel Clarke was counting with the point of her umbrella the boxes on the truck—large boxes of yellow or maroon leather, either long and soft or high and massive, with shining brass clasps and locks, and long stripes painted a vivid white and red, upon which was described a large red "C." Standing beneath the roof of the pretty little station of Coire, amongst the crowd that surged, as it waited from minute to minute the departure of the Engadine Express, Mabel Clarke, tall, slender, upright, in her pearl-grey, tailor-made dress, which outlined all her youthful grace, not wanting in a certain expression of robustness and strength, watched the porters who were placing their boxes in the train. She counted up to eighteen, of all forms and dimensions, with the great clamorous "C" in blood red.

"Eighteen," she exclaimed, turning round. "Eighteen, isn't that so, dear Broughton?"

An elderly woman, with hair more white than grey, quietly dressed in black, nodded her head, with a gesture not lacking in respect.

"Are you sure that is all?" resumed Mabel Clarke, with a slight frown of her dark chestnut eyebrows on the white forehead. "Eighteen seems very few for mamma and me."

"Mrs. Clarke expects four boxes from Paris. Everything was not ready from the tailor's to leave with us."

" Ah, very well, then ! " murmured Mabel Clarke, nodding her head. Turning her back, she approached her mother, who, patiently seated beneath the station roof near a little buffet table, had been served with a cup of coffee, which she was not drinking.

Mabel had continually to pass different groups of people who were massing together for departure. Pushed about and jostled, she reached her mother at last, and asked, with a little smile :

" All right, mamma ? "

" All right, rather bored," replied Mrs. Clarke, shaking her head, as she regarded the crowd with a lofty and silent expression of fastidiousness.

Men, women, and children were coming and going ; strolling, stopping, and running. There were old ladies dressed in black, with awkward round hats from which hung a dark blue or brown veil, and who were pressing round their necks large fur tippets against the cold which had surprised them on leaving the train. There were young women dressed brightly, with large, light travelling-cloaks left open, beneath which appeared short skirts and elegantly booted feet, and hats enveloped in white veils. There were children of various ages, watched over carefully by nurses and governesses, and there was even a nurse with a dress of white and grey stripes, a large white and grey cloak, and an encircling cap of white ribbons above her mass of hair : she carried the baby in her arms, wrapped in a little white fur jacket, all rosy in its infantile sleep.

Men of every race and age mingled with the women they were accompanying : they separated from them, returned and disputed. There were fine old men—tall and thin, of energetic and handsome countenance—beardless old men, with invincible, lordly stamp in face and person, and other old men, stout, with heightened complexion and heavy moustaches, with a gay and

thoughtless air ; then middle-aged men, some of a consumptive appearance, but bearing traces of former virile beauty, others showing signs of pleasures enjoyed too violently. There were robust young men, well made, whose faces, though regular and perfect in feature, lacked expression ; while other youths, whose appearance was fashionable, but slender and delicate, had colourless complexions, and in all their aspect an absence of health. On all this curious and attractive variety—a great mass of men of every age—there was a decided ugliness, a common awkwardness, though varied in form, and a proud, harsh expression. According to their ages and conditions this rudeness, imperiousness, and clownishness assumed different aspects, but it was manifest in the high and insolent voices that spoke German, in the gestures, now grotesque and now solemn, but ever imperious—the German crowd dominating nearly all the other nations.

Beyond the peculiar character of their clothes there were to be recognised those whom the trains from Calais, Brussels, Vienna, and Berlin had brought together at Paris or Basle to make up the great cosmopolitan Engadine train : the Englishman with white shoes, check overcoat, turned-up trousers, cloth cap ; the Frenchman with light cloak, which he was wrapping round himself, as he already felt chilly and caught by the keen mountain air. Finally, and above all, there was the great mass of Germans, clothed in suits which were too baggy, or too long, or too short, of strange cut and gloomy colours, and in stranger cloaks. But especially there was the Tyrolese costume, with its short breeches, jacket of big pleats, and belt of the same cloth ; on the head a green cap always too small, with a narrow crease, a myrtle-green cap, like the suit, with a Tyrolese feather behind that resembled an interrogation mark. These suits were worn on fat bodies and thin, or broad and bony, and the cap on a

square head, with ruddy cheeks, blond moustaches, and peeling neck in reddish-purple folds. Lower down, standing apart, one of them, one only, had an imposing stature and a robust head, a face with a black beard, rough and bristly, with two eyes of sweetest blue ; he the only one among so many, apart, solitary, and silent.

While the long and complicated work of loading the baggage of the crowd was being accomplished, Mabel Clarke, keeping close to her mother, watched with her large grey eyes, full of an ardent curiosity of life, those who were moving around her. Not far from her two ladies were seated round another *café* table. One of them was of uncertain age, dressed in black, with a black hat and a decided grey veil ; the other was a very young figure, bending as she wrote the addresses on several post cards. Nothing was revealed save the lines of a white and delicate face and the curve of a pretty mouth, closed and smileless. Beneath the light blue veil her hair was very blond and pleasant to the eye, while the hand that ran over the cards as she wrote was very white.

"English," said Mabel, almost to herself, with a rather pretty little laugh of disparagement.

"Yes," replied her mother, with a rather more pronounced laugh. The writer raised her head, and revealed a quite pale face beneath whose very transparent complexion coursed a pink flush. The *tout ensemble* was white and virginal, an appearance which was still more increased by the white travelling-dress. The smile round Mabel Clarke's beautiful but jesting mouth increased.

"*Poitrinaire, peut-être,*" murmured her mother in French, with a strong American accent.

The daughter's eyes were averted, attracted by another feminine figure ; a young woman who beside her was sprinkling drops of water on a bunch of roses that she was pressing to herself, which appeared faded owing to the length of the journey.

She was slender and tall, with a little erect and proud head, and a refined face with charming features, without true beauty, but charming in their harmony, with a staidness of postures and gestures and a ladylike and disdainful aloofness from whatever was happening around her. Two or three times Mabel regarded her and made some lively movement to attract her attention. The other did not turn round and observed nothing in her gracious and proud aloofness.

"French: exquisite," sighed Mabel Clarke.

"Exquisite," sighed her mother, even more deeply.

Meanwhile the guttural German cries announced the departure for the Engadine, and the crowd thronged at the doors, carrying characteristic hand luggage; tennis-rackets in their coverings, travelling-cloaks, sticks with chamois-horn handles and iron-spiked tips, and leather cases with golf-clubs.

As they clambered up, from short skirts the ladies disclosed dainty feet, shod some of them as if they were to walk through the boulevards of Paris, and others as if they must immediately climb the Bernina. Mabel Clarke and her mother, followed step by step, like a shadow, by Mrs. Broughton, approached without undue hurry the large compartment which they had reserved. A railway official advanced, as if searching amidst the crowd, with a yellow envelope in his hands.

At once Mrs. Clarke summoned him.

"A telegram for Clarke?"

"Ja," said the man, offering the envelope.

Mrs. Clarke read her telegram quietly.

Mabel in a whisper asked:

"Papa! all right?"

"All right."

Loudly the German voices of the railway officials resounded.

"Thusis, Preda, Bergun, Tiefenkastel, St. Moritz—St. Moritz—St. Moritz."

As the train left overflowing with travellers, from the lowered windows there was an appearing and disappearing of heads, veiled in white and grey, in blue and brown; there was a fluctuating of faces, fresh or consumptive, while some large German face all aflame, with great yellow moustaches and green Tyrolese cap that pressed the square forehead, would lean out to exchange loud and harsh German words with a friend, who might have been his brother, so much did he resemble him, as he raised his head from the station platform.

"St. Moritz! St. Moritz! St. Moritz!"

This was the last feeble echo which reached the travellers who were already on their way. For some minutes there was a sound of windows being raised rapidly against the fresh, almost cold, evening air; and no face leant out throughout the long train to gaze at the country where the Tamina places its whirlpool gorges beneath high rocks, while the flowering gardens of La Rezia smile around pretty white villas, which are more Italian than Swiss. For some time no one passed in the narrow corridor that flanked the first-class compartments; everyone remained quietly in his place.

In their reserved compartment—six places for three people—Mrs. Clarke and Miss Mabel Clarke of the great house of Clarke of New York, of which John Clarke, husband and father, was the soul, with his great talent and magnificent business activity—the house of Clarke rated at six hundred actual millions, John Clarke himself at three hundred millions, and Miss Mabel credited with a dowry of fifty millions—mother and daughter, silent and quiet, were receiving the most minute attentions from Mrs. Broughton, so that the remainder of the journey of three hours and a half might be comfortable for the two ladies. Mrs. Clarke especially accepted these

attentions with the aspect of a cold and silent idol. Mrs. Broughton opened some large travelling rugs of fur and the little white and grey feathers of the eider, and wrapped them round the two ladies. She drew forth five or six cushions of stamped leather and Liberty silk, and placed them behind Mrs. Clarke's shoulders and at her side ; she made long play with a silver and cut-glass scent bottle, sending into the air, on the windows and seats of the compartment, a little shower of eau de Cologne, together with another, rather stronger, perfume, perhaps a disinfectant ; and she hung on the linings of the compartment two or three portable electric lamps to illuminate them when night came, and to enable them to read better. In an open, red leather case, a *nécessaire*, full of everything for making tea in the train, shone with its warm tones of silver gilt. Afterwards she gave a questioning and respectful glance to her chief mistress, Mrs. Clarke, who either did not notice her, or did not deign to do so, and another glance at Mabel Clarke, who replied with the shortest little nod in the negative. Mrs. Broughton settled herself in a far corner of the compartment, drew forth from a bag a long note-book, and with a small pencil began to write some notes and figures therein. Suddenly Mrs. Clarke awoke from her proud torpor, and said :

" Broughton, the big and small boxes ? "

The woman understood at once, and rising, pointed to two long boxes, or rather coffers, on the rack, of yellow leather with steel locks and clasps, and added :

" I checked them before starting. " .

Suddenly Mabel asked :

" Mamma, did you bring your large pearl necklace ? "

" Yes, dear. "

" And the large diadem ? "

" Of course. "

" And, mamma, did you bring the tiara ? "

"The tiara, of course ! It was necessary."

Mabel approved, with a charming smile. Then she resumed :

"Mamma, they say the Italians at St. Moritz have extraordinary jewels."

"Do you believe it, Mabel ? "

"They say so. Also some South American ladies have great pearls and diamonds, mamma."

"Do you believe all of them can be more beautiful than my jewels ? Mabel, do you think so ? "

And a keen expression of uneasiness, the first that had animated that marble countenance, seized her.

"To me it seems impossible," added Mabel thoughtfully.

"Also to me it seems impossible."

In the next compartment were two ladies alone, who had also taken six places for themselves. One was a woman of thirty, with a very white face slightly coloured as to the cheeks, with two marvellous large eyes of deep grey, somewhat velvety, while the whites of the pupils had a blue reflection. Her mouth was vivid and sinuous, more expressive than beautiful. Her hair was of a very bright and fine chestnut, massed round the neck and waving over the temples. Only the temples showed a streak of blue veins, and the little ears were exceedingly white. One of the hands, bared of its kid glove, showed long, graceful, but bony fingers. She who accompanied her was the image of her, though with thirty more years ; but she was very fat, with an expression of perfect good-nature on the broad face and an unexplainable sense of fear in the eyes that had remained childish.

The younger woman was dressed in white cloth ; but she wore a long jacket of otter with chinchilla facings of a soft grey, which suited her rather morbid beauty, and she remained huddled in her furs, as if cold, with her head snuggled in the collar. Sometimes she coughed a little.

Then her mother started, became disturbed, and questioned her a little anxiously in German. The daughter scarcely replied, in a whisper, and settled herself better in her corner, as she dreamed with closed eyes. A scent of sandal emanated from her, and all the minute, very elegant luggage bore her initials, an "E." and an "L."—Else Landau—with a baronial coronet.

All was silent, too, in a compartment further on, full of ladies. The exquisite French lady, of the faded roses, preserved her aspect of one who neither sees nor hears, since she neither wishes to see nor hear. Her hands, gloved in new white gloves, held an open book, whose title was not to be discovered, since it was hidden in an antique silk book cover. She turned over the pages very seldom, perhaps keeping the book open so as not to occupy herself with her neighbours. There was a dark lady, with fine arched eyebrows, black, passionate eyes, a carnal and florid mouth, and all this beauty augmented and made artificial by the rouge on the cheeks, the black beneath the eyes, and the carmine on the lips. She was still a very young woman, but she was got up like an old one. Every now and then the dark woman, so strangely embellished, exchanged a word with her husband, who came to see her from another compartment, where he had found a seat. The husband was tall and gross, with a rather truculent countenance and big rings on his fingers. They spoke Spanish. The third lady, the English girl, she who was writing post cards in the station at Coire, kept silence behind the window that gave on to the corridor. Now all the virginal purity of her very white face was apparent beneath the slightly blue shadow of her veil. Beneath the mother-of-pearl complexion a rosiness spread itself almost at every beating of the arteries. The closed lips, together with the eyes of periwinkle blue, which gazed in sweetness and candour, all spoke of the fragile and fascinating beauty of Anglo-

Saxon women, whose grace is invincible. Her companion was beside her ; but she must have been used to the patient silences of long journeys.

As the train climbed in bizarre curves and loops the great pass of Albula, crossing daring bridges and more daring viaducts, ever climbing from Thusis, from Solis, from Tiefenkastel, not one of those travellers gave a thought to the singular and powerful ascent of the train, as it elevated itself ever more and more towards its lofty point of arrival. Here there was a lively chattering in German, in French, in English, especially in German ; there someone was slumbering in his seat ; here two men and two women were playing bridge. Others were trying to read big papers like the " *Koelnische Zeitung*," " *The Times*," and the " *Temps*." Some governesses and nurses were watching two or three compartments full of children. A French preceptor, a priest, was talking in a low voice to a youth who was accompanying him; the nurse was walking with her baby in the corridor with slow and heavy step. Now and then some young man came and went hurriedly in the corridor, giving a glance at all the compartments where the ladies were, stopping behind the windows where some feminine profile was to be seen, with particular curiosity at the last compartment, where Mrs. Clarke, very bored with the slow journey, as she said, had lowered the blinds.

No one knew anything, or wished to, of that summer night and its cold gusts passing over the heights of the Lenzerhorn and mounting to Preda, to Filisur, to Bergun, penetrating the heart of the mountains, and issuing from them to cross the deep valleys, leaving to right and left peaks covered with snow, to which no one gave a glance through the windows as they rumbled across fantastic bridges that joined two precipices. No one knew or wished to know how rich with Alpine perfumes was the summer night, nor how the voices of forest, meadow, and

waters around the train were forming the great mountain chorus without words. No one knew or wished to know what a tremendous and mortal thing it had been for mind and hands and life of man to construct that iron road of the high mountains, and how many existences had been scattered there. Each trembled with impatience, anticipating the halting of the train at little stations all of wood behind which some houses gleamed white or a church tower rose.

The women were slumbering or thinking or dreaming behind their veils. Each repressed her impatience to arrive up there, whither she was carrying either a great, keen longing, or one more subdued, or an unrestrainable curiosity, a need of health, or a humble, secret dream. Some were talking to cheat the waiting, and exchanging names of hotels ; and old frequenters of the Engadine were instructing novices with a knowing air. There was not one of them who was not aspiring with secret ardour—sprung from the idlest or perhaps most puerile instincts, or moral and material necessity, or from a dream—to the goal, to St. Moritz ; careless of everything except of arriving up there, where their life should suffer the whip's lash, or the triumph of vanity, or the victory of ambition, or health regained, or pleasure broadly conquered, or an unknown fortune taken by assault. And when in the evening the word *Samaden* was clearly and precisely heard, and each felt that the goal was almost touched, every torpor was scattered, every silence was interrupted, every dream released before the reality. Jumping to their feet in extreme impatience, all of them crowded to the windows and doors. Still some minutes and yet more, and then the word resounded from carriage to carriage, repeated softly and loudly from a hundred voices :

" St. Moritz ! St. Moritz ! St. Moritz ! "

In the obscurity of the night the spectacle unfolded itself as if in a broad, deep stage setting. All the hill was

gleaming with lights, now feeble, now flaming. In capricious and charming lines burnt the lights of the Palace Hotel, in lines direct and uniform those of the Schweizerhof ; like an immense edifice perforated with a thousand windows, like a colossal plaything of giant babies, flamed the white Grand Hotel, and further on high, at the summit, in triple lines, gleamed at the foot of the mountains, the Hôtel Kulm. Around these mastodons shone the other houses and smaller hotels.

The blaze of lights from the Palace and the Grand hotels, and from the whole crown of large lamps which illuminated the road from the village to the baths, was wonderfully reflected in the dark lake ; thus the lights were multiplied and eyes and soul were dazed thereby. On the opposite bank the wood, which skirted the lake, the Acla Silva, had neither house nor light in its sylvan austerity. Directly above on the Rosatch and Curvatsch the whiteness of the snow became even purer in the dark night. Very far away, in a circle on the horizon, the snows of the Julier, the Polaschin, and the Albana gleamed whitely, and still further away at the extremity glistened the Margna with her twin peaks. A thousand eyes could not turn away from that beacon of light which streamed from hotels and houses in patches, while from below, from the Bad, long green streaks of colour flickered as they were reflected in the lake. At the vision which scorched eyes and heart, as the train drew up at the little terminus, there was a crowding and jostling to descend and touch that land of every promise, and to be immersed in that light.

The omnibus conductors of the great hotels were running hither and thither as they gathered together their travellers ; noisily luggage was piled upon luggage, and carriages departed and carriages returned in rapid movement. White, green, and grey omnibuses were crammed with travellers, and the laden vehicles turned

and disappeared to the rapid trot of their good horses, towards the upper village and the baths on the shores of the lake. St. Moritz Dorf flamed scintillatingly in the night, and flamed more blandly and afar St. Moritz Bad.

Around Mrs. Clarke and the smiling Mabel Clarke a circle of railway officials, servants, and porters was formed ; the secretary of the " Palace " arrived in a hurry in a private carriage, and was obsequiously talking in English in a low voice. Mollified, the mother received the homage, and Mabel smiled at the flaming lights of the uplands where for a month she was to pass a gay and vivid existence, where her fresh and strong youth should be intoxicated with joy. They left in the carriage with Mrs. Broughton and the secretary.

The exquisite French lady also left alone in a carriage, still tranquil, still aloof, gave the address of the " Palace." The Viennese, Else von Landau, with the large otter furs, who coughed and smelled of sandalwood, got into a carriage, and the mother with the startled eyes climbed in with her and gave an address towards St. Moritz Bad.

The young Spanish woman, so made up, who was bound for the Grand Hotel, departed, disputing in rapid Spanish with her husband and appearing annoyed at going to an hotel different from the Palace Hotel, whither she had seen so many people of aristocratic appearance bound. But no one, whether climbing into omnibus, or jumping into carriage, or taking on foot the path that leads to the Dorf, gave a single glance to the majestic mountains that had seen the passing of the ages, to the proud and solitary peaks so near to the sky, to the quiet and dark waters of the lake, to the brown woods, whence came fresh and sharp fragrances. None gave them a glance. All were trembling with satisfaction at having arrived at last ; and were eager to immerse themselves in the exalting stream of life up there amidst

the light and the luxury and joy of fantasy and senses. The young English girl only, of the virginal countenance, before climbing into the "Kulm" bus, raised her veil, and gazed with her periwinkle-blue eyes at the white heights so deserted and imposing. A smile for the first time bloomed on the pure mouth.

CHAPTER III

THE large clock with face all of blue and hours marked in gold, which adorns the slender, upright spire of the English church, sounded ten ; its grave and harmonious tones spread themselves in long, far-reaching waves from the Dorf upon the light and fresh morning air. Standing at the door of the Hôtel Caspar Badruth, Lucio Sabini, who was just dressed, aristocratically fashionable, with his slender, tall figure, and calm and peaceful countenance beneath the brim of his soft, dark grey felt hat, compared the time with his watch. With even and elastic step, casting a limpid, tranquil glance, now at the bright celestial blue of the horizon, now at the deep, dense greenery of the pines, now at the bright green of the dewy meadows, regarding everything with eyes that were kindly and at times full of tenderness, he descended the footpath from the Dorf to St. Moritz Bad. Ahead of him a woman's figure was also going with even step, in a costume of correct cut, though perhaps a little severe, of a rather purple hue, with a white hat surrounded by a purple veil. In the features and very fair hair, proud profile, and pale cheeks he recognised the Comtesse Marcella de la Ferté Guyon, a young French lady whom he knew slightly, from meeting her for two or three years at St. Moritz, and who always exercised upon him the attraction of silent and proud women who surround themselves with mystery, to conceal a love, a sorrow, a tragedy, or even to hide their aridness and coldness for all such things which for a long time have been dead within them.

"Do I disturb you, madam?" he asked, placing himself beside the Countess, after having greeted her, with the easy yet serious grace that was particularly his.

"Oh, no!" she replied, with a very slight smile, both courteous and proud. "I am going to St. Moritz Bad."

"So am I. You are going for a walk like me?"

"Like you, I think not," she murmured, but kindly.

"And why, Signora?"

The Countess was silent for an instant, as if hesitating in her reserve.

"I am going to church," she replied hurriedly, *sotto voce*.

"Ah," exclaimed the other, reproved, "is it a festival to-day?"

"No, it is not a feast day," she murmured, without adding anything further.

"Are you going to the Catholic church of the Bad?"

"Yes; it is less full of well-known people, of smart people," she murmured, with lowered eyes.

"I imagine, madam, that you will pray for all sinners?" he asked, forcing a smile, to enliven the gloomy conversation.

"I try to," she replied vaguely.

"Then through you I am sure to obtain grace from Heaven," he concluded, with a smile.

The lady glanced at him with her proud, already distant eyes, from which in the past rivers of tears must have flowed, clouding them for ever. Lucio bowed, pressed the hand she offered him, and left her, walking a little more rapidly to get away and leave her in freedom.

"She is a tower of ivory, but so interesting," he thought, as he lightly resumed his way in the soft air. For an instant, moved by a keen desire to conquer and penetrate that solitary, closed soul, he thought of getting Francis Mornand, who was the fashionable chronicler of the Engadine, to tell him the private

history of the Comtesse Marcella de la Ferté Guyon, to lay siege to that heart, and with a complete knowledge of its long agony, to obtain a precious victory there, where no one should again penetrate. That sudden and strange desire of his of conquest over the prisoner who believed in her own freedom fascinated him. But a young woman's face was smiling at him from some distance as she came towards him, and he halted beside a young girl who was climbing towards the Dorf with rapid steps, while her mother, a middle-aged woman, followed more slowly. She was a girl of rare beauty, with large, dark eyes furnished with long, dark lashes, a lovely mouth curved up a little at the corners, like that of a Greek statue of Erigone, and a white complexion over which was suffused a flush of health.

Still, every now and then the eyes became hard, with a scrutinising glance—the mouth closed with a half-mocking and half-disdainful smile, and her whole countenance, that resembled a flower of youth and beauty, seemed a flower laden with poison. Lucio Sabini and Lia Norescu, a young Roumanian, immediately plunged into a lively, gay, and slightly sarcastic conversation, while the mother listened silently, with an air of complacency and indulgence.

"Ah, here is our divine Lia!" Lucio exclaimed, as he held the little gloved hand in his. "St. Moritz was dead without you."

"The Society For The Embellishment of St. Moritz made me come," she replied, laughing; "the Kurverein wrote to me, and I couldn't resist."

"And how many suitors? How many flirts?"

"Many, far too many; I can spare some for other girls."

"New and old?"

"Many new and few old; nearly all new."

"Handsome, rich, amusing?"

" Nearly all tiresome."

And a gesture of contempt contracted her mouth, that so much resembled a flower, and the eyes became wicked.

" And with whom are you flirting, Sabini ? "

" I should like to flirt with you ; but you have always spurned me."

" Always ! "

" Even now ? "

" Even now. Why don't you flirt with Madame Lawrence, the beautiful Lawrence, the divine Lawrence, this year's professional beauty ? "

" Thanks ! She is too beautiful for me. Like you, she has twelve flirts."

" I have fourteen," replied Lia Norescu promptly, as she flashed her magnificent eyes. " And Miss Clarke, with her dowry of fifty, one hundred, or one hundred and fifty millions ; why not pay court to her ? "

Never in a soft womanly voice, in a voice young and sweet, in a French pronounced exquisitely, hissed such irony and such bitterness.

" I do not pay court to millionaire girls," replied Lucio Sabini, a little coldly.

" You court the others, the poor ones," replied Lia vivaciously ; " but you marry neither : you don't want to marry anyone."

" How do you know ? "

" Oh, I am always well informed," replied Lia profoundly ; " it is impossible to deceive me."

" Then you are a girl without illusions ? "

" I am a monster, Sabini ; I have no illusions." And they left each other, both laughing loudly and falsely at the last word. Ah, he knew the secret of Lia Norescu, the beautiful Roumanian girl, who spoke and wrote five languages perfectly, who was of high mettle, and who for five years had been everywhere cosmopolitan society was to be found, at Cairo, Nice, Rome, St. Moritz,

Ostend, and Biarritz, in search of a rich husband—very rich, immensely rich—for she had not even a penny for a dowry. Her father and mother, her brothers and cousins, all urged on the beautiful girl this marriage of money, and some of them, at an immense sacrifice, provided the travelling expenses ; some gave the dresses, and some the cloaks and hats. Lia Norescu appeared everywhere, like a flower laden with an irresistible attraction, followed by the quiet and indulgent mother who adored her daughter, and everywhere she had her court of admirers, an ever-changing court. No one held out more than one or two seasons, all vanished and others appeared. But no one remained, and the flower within her soul contained an ever greater poison of disillusion.

" Poor little girl, poor little girl," murmured Sabini to himself, with sincere sympathy, as he withdrew. He was sorry for that splendid creature, forced at twenty-two to fight a hard fate without results, when her beauty had the most imperious right to riches and luxury. And softly his spirit fell in love with the idea of being able to offer to the young woman of irresistible beauty the treasures of the earth, of offering her a rich and powerful friend, or a brother of his, or himself, perhaps, so that all the deep poison which rendered that flower venomous might vanish, and Lia Norescu might be a colour, a perfume, a splendour without cark and fret, without blemish.

By then his steps had absently led him to the meadows that surround the Catholic church of St. Moritz Bad, and the soft grass bathed by dew, and brushed by hidden rivulets, exhaled a pungent fragrance. Desirous of sensations even more intense in their simplicity, he ascended a path that leads to a wood dominating the lake. Already the path, in that vivid, bright hour, in which the colour almost of heaven was reflected on everything, with an air which to breathe was almost to

drink the elixir of life, was being traversed by men and women, in couples and groups ; some walking hurriedly in their desire to immerse themselves in the shade of the wood, others more slowly, but nearly all silently. Lucio Sabini's acute eye, on the alert for every fresh face, a lady's especially, discovered here and there those who, as they traversed the little path bathed by the sun, which further on penetrates beneath the trees, as under a soft arch of verdure, carried in their hearts and glances and actions the soft and exhilarating beginning of a little, or perhaps a big love affair. Even more acutely he scrutinised the faces and expressions of those who, tired and oppressed by a love declaration too long prolonged, at which they had grown accustomed, now refreshed and rested, were again joining hands up there, as they recognised the clasp of yore amongst the protecting trees.

He entered the wood alone. A secret, biting nostalgia seized him because of his solitude on that heavenly morning. More restlessly and inquisitively his eyes sought those he met, the eyes of women and girls who, dressed in white—graceful matutinal sprites—came and went beneath the verdure of the trees, which here and there the sun's rays rendered bright and yellow. In a corner of the wood, beneath a lofty pine he discovered a well-known figure. The woman was seated on a great white boulder, and with lowered eyes was tracing with her parasol amongst the grass and stones some strange letters of a name or a word. Approaching softly he recognised a Hungarian lady, who was staying alone in the same hotel—a Clara Howath, who always appeared at meal-times carrying a book which she read during the repast. She had a rather dissipated face, with two vague, sad eyes and a little pale mouth like a dead rose : she was fashionably dressed, as seemed natural to her. Lucio drew nearer, and when he was close to

the Hungarian lady he noticed that she was weeping silently.

"Are you in trouble, Madame?" he asked in a low voice, discreetly.

Clara Howath showed no surprise at his approach, or that he should be talking to her and asking her so much. She raised her tear-stricken face, and replied naturally:

"Yes, Signor."

"Can I help you?" he insisted in an insinuating voice, slightly moved.

"No, Signor," she replied simply.

As he stood beside her and hid her from those who were passing in the little path, he looked at her attentively. Her right hand was loaded with precious stones, the other wore on the ring finger a gold circlet, a love token.

"Have you lost someone—someone who was dear to you?"

Oh, what desolation there was in the woman's eyes as she raised them to him, so supplicatingly and so desperately.

"Is he dead?" he asked, disturbed.

"No," she said, "I have lost him, but he is not dead."

The pale mouth was twisted in sorrow, as if she wished to stifle a great cry, or a sob. Slightly pale, Lucio Sabini said in a low voice:

"I beg your pardon, Signora."

"It doesn't matter, it doesn't matter," she replied, with sad sweetness, shaking her head.

Lucio Sabini's step became slower as he withdrew into the wood. Suddenly the shining light of the sun amidst the high branches seemed colourless to him, and feeble the twittering of the little birds among the bushes, and languishing the flight of the white butterflies amidst the fragrant clumps of wild mint and dark wild vanilla. His heart contracted with sorrow for the strange lady,

Clara Howath, whose name alone he knew, whose deep grief, breathed forth from her soul, made her no longer recognise either the shame of tears or womanly reserve, to such an extent as to tell all her misery to a stranger in a public road, amongst strange people passing and staring. He would have liked to have been *the other* ; he who was not dead but whom the deserted woman had lost for ever. He would have liked to have been *the other*, so far off and forgetful, the traitor who had perjured himself and forgotten ; so that he might return to the wood, where the azure of the firmament and the blue of the lake peeped amidst the trees, to take that unhappy woman in his arms and kiss away her tears.

Drawing farther away he was once more Lucio Sabini, and the visions seen that morning were already settling in his imagination ; but still more feverishly within him became the need of the unknown love, of the unknown lady whom he had come to seek amongst the mountains, of the woman whom he should love an hour, a day, a month, and whom he should never see again, who perhaps might love him for a summer evening or a summer morning : but an unknown woman of another land and another race.

Up above, in a remote corner of the wood, he halted and sat down on a tree trunk, which perhaps had been struck down by lightning in an autumnal storm, or perhaps had been transported from the heights of Corvatschi by the fury of the torrent in winter. The trunk lay there amongst the tall grass and rocks, the little violas with yellow eyes, and tall and slender marguerites. Lucio sat down and drew from his coat pocket a lady's purse which he had found the day before, towards dusk, at the Dorf, in a solitary lane close to the tennis courts. It was a smallish purse of chain silver, with a broad encircling silver hinge adorned with three large turquoises ; a silver chain kept it suspended

through two rings. For the fourth time Lucio opened the lady's purse, and again examined its contents, minutely and curiously. First of all there was a little handkerchief of white cambric, adorned with a fine embroidery of white flowers, and in the corner was a tiny initial—an "L." From the cambric a subtle and feverish perfume exhaled: every time as Lucio placed it to his nostrils he had a sense of delight. He repeated the gesture, and again he had the same sensation. The purse also contained, slipped through a gold ring, some charms in silver and gold: a medal for a good journey with a figure of St. Christopher; a golden olive, har-binger of peace; a little bluish-green scarab; another medal with just a name inscribed and nothing else—Lilian; and a small hand on which were engraved some oriental figures. One by one Lucio for the fourth time passed these small jewels in review, turning and returning them between his fingers, seeking to discover something fresh. Then he set himself to study the last object which that feminine purse contained.

The last object, the most mysterious and important, was a little pocket-book of dark blue leather, closed by a slender silver pencil. Inside, on the first page, was stuck down a four-leaved clover, a little shamrock that had been sought for and found in the fields, and after being dried, had been pasted on the first leaf, and underneath it in fine letters, firm and long, was the name—ever that name—Lilian. Many of the pages of the pocket-book were covered with lines of writing, sometimes in ink, sometimes in pencil. They seemed to be notes thrown there according to the day and the state of the soul. Without stirring from his ruined tree trunk, the dark bark of which was peeling, with his feet amidst the deep grass and woodland flowers, Lucio re-read page for page what the unknown Lilian had written in the pocket-book. A date in English on a page, a date

which went back two years, to December, and still in English, Portia's exclamation in *The Merchant of Venice*: "The world is too heavy for my little body." Further, still in English, a singular phrase: "One must wait in hope and faith. *Someone* will come: surely he will come." Then, in a medley, the name of a French or German woman, with some address in Paris or Vienna. On another page, another character, still feminine, had written in English a farewell: "Dear, dearest Lilian, don't forget me; I won't forget you," with a signature—Ethel. Lucio Sabini read on with immense attention, examining the phrases, words, and letters, seeking to divine even more than they said and showed. In French, on another page, again in the writing of the mysterious one, were two questions: "Must one live to love? Must one die to love?" And at last on the penultimate page, in a scrawling writing, like a child that is striving to write something he does not understand, in almost round letters, was a verse of Dante's, copied with an orthographical error: "*Amor che a cor gentil ratto si appende.*"

Each time at these words so vibrant with love's emotion which the unknown woman's hand had copied letter for letter, which surely she must have understood or someone have explained to her; at these words of the poet Lucio Sabini trembled, charmed as he was by brief loves encompassed by poesy, because of their mystery and their brevity.

Now there came the last page, where in haste the woman had written in pencil in French: "How high and close to heaven are the mountains! I should like to return here in winter, to the highest mountain, amidst the whitest and purest snow. . . ."

* There was nothing else. Mechanically Lucio closed the book, replacing the slender silver pencil. He replaced, too, the little cambric kerchief, the charms, and the little

book in the purse, thereby stretching the clasp to close it. For some time, as he pursued his fantasy, he dreamed of her who had lost that purse, and he saw in his dream the figures of many ladies who surprised him and looked at him, who smiled and beckoned to him to follow them, and each of them, it seemed to him, might be the unknown Lilian ; now dark and handsome, now slender as a reed, now with eyes sky-blue and smiling, now with eyes black and languishing.

Suddenly in the air the Dorf clock, blue with gilded hours, struck ponderously and harmoniously half-past eleven. The sound spread itself along the lake and in the woods. Lucio Sabini burst into laughter at his dream and at himself. Perhaps—in fact surely—she who had lost the purse so full of poetical matter, and bore the floral name of Lilian, might be an English old maid, angular, with pince-nez. Lucio laughed at himself and his dream, which melted in the clear air of that heavenly morning:

CHAPTER IV

AT midday, before and after luncheon, the telephones at all the hotels and villas did nothing but ring in their little cupboards, and in German, English, and French—especially in German—there was an incessant calling, questioning and answering. The morning that had spread over the Engadine a sky which seemed a shimmering mantle of azure silk, and that had given to the eye an inexplicable brightness, and to every panting breast a contented appearance, almost as if it were a strange, sublime potion, had developed into a splendid afternoon. Men and women who had lazily passed the morning hours in an hotel room, or in strolling up and down the nearer meeting-places of the Bad and Dorf, were seized with a desire of faring forth, away along the majestic roads and paths and hills—everywhere an afternoon could be lived in the open air.

In the hotel halls and drawing-rooms there was a continual making and organising of plans, a calling up by telephone of other hotels, coach-hirers, and remote restaurants up above and tea-rooms, to summon friends and acquaintances together, to order carriages and bespeak teas for fifteen and twenty persons. Frau Mentzel, the exceedingly wealthy Hamburg Jewess—she herself was a Dutchwoman, her husband an American, and her sons had been born in different countries of the world—who was unable to live without a court of ten or fifteen persons at lunch or dinner, and who could not pass twenty-four hours without changing her

dress four times, who threw her money out of the window and yet always talked about money, and quoted the price of her clothes and how much the flowers that adorned her table had cost ; Frau Mentzel, courted by all the parasites of both sexes, telephoned to her friends from the " Stahlbad," where she was staying, and which at all hours of the day was filled with the noise of her train, to come at once, as she was setting out for the Fexthal glacier to take tea up there, and on every side the usual parasites said yes ; but others, the smart people, whom Frau Mentzel would have liked to have had with her, fenced and adduced excuses of other outings and excursions.

Don Lucio Sabini answered Frau Mentzel at the telephone that he was unable to come since he was engaged for tea elsewhere, moreover the Fexthal glacier was unfortunately too far off for him to go and look her up. The beautiful Madame Lawrence, from the " Palace," advised all her suitors and a lady friend or two that they were going in five or six carriages to Maloja, that they would leave at three, not later, so as to arrive at five at the Kursaal Maloja ; but her lady friends were few, all more or less insignificant as to physiognomies, dresses and hats, in order that she should shine like a jewel among them. Vittorio Lante, who for an evening had attached himself to the court of the divinity of the year, excused himself from going to the Maloja ; for with a group of friends he had been invited by Mrs. Clarke to tea at the Golf Club. Countess Fulvia Gioia telephoned from the " Victoria " to two of her friends to ask if they were disposed to walk with her to Pontresina and back, a walk through the woods of about three hours, but so pleasant and peaceful amidst the pines, along the white torrent that descends from the Bernina. Although her second youth was waning, Countess Fulvia kept her beauty, preserving her health by living a life of action,

ardour, and open air, passing July at the seaside, August in the mountains, the autumn in the country : so all her youthful fascination lasted, and that in homage to the last powerful and profound love which held her completely, to which she was bound by an indissoluble knot because it was the last. Of the two friends, the Duchesse de Langeais, a Frenchwoman of her own age, who treasured her beauty as a precious thing in the half-light, refused, fearing light, air, and fatigue, lest they should all discover the invincible traces of age, and fearing lest certain weaknesses and troubles should be too apparent after such a walk. The other, Donna Carlotta Albano, an old lady, who welcomed without sorrow the end of beauty, youth, and love, as she set herself to love what remains after love is over, accepted.

From Sils Maria the Misses Ellen and Norah West telephoned their friend Mabel Clarke to ask if they could look in at the " Palace " about four o'clock to take her with them to tea at the " Belvoir," the restaurant half-way from Pontresina ; but smiling at the telephone Mabel Clarke declared that mamma had invited some delightful young men to tea with them at the Golf Club, and that, even so near as they were to St. Moritz, it was quite impossible that day.

At the Grand Hotel the Spanish lady with the soft eyebrows painted black, and lips painted red, with cheeks disappearing beneath a stratum of *veloutine Rachel*, but in spite of this of a most alluring beauty, Donna Mercédès de Fuentes, was torturing herself and her husband, really to know where the high society of the Engadine would foregather at tea on that day, and where she could take a sister and her friend, who had arrived the day before from Madrid, to show them this high society. At each different news with which Francis Mornand, the chronicler of the Engadine, whimsically furnished her, Donna Mercédès de Fuentes, restless and

agitated, changed her mind, suffering in every fibre from her snobbishness.

By two o'clock, and at three and four, the coming and going, the meeting and disappearing of the large stage-coaches drawn by four horses and full of gentlemen and ladies, of large brakes filled with smiling girls and young men, of landaus drawn by impatient horses, of victorias with solitary couples, became even more vertiginous.

There was a running greeting from one carriage to another, a moment's halt to invite each other to set out together, and a prompt acceptance from someone who was jumping up into his carriage smiling. There was a general giving of appointments for dinner and for the evening, with a gay cry in French, in English, or in German; there was a cracking of whips, a tinkling of horses' bells, and sounding of coach horns, and over all a fluttering of the veils of every colour and shade which surrounded the ladies' heads.

The carriages descended towards Silvaplana, Sils, Fexthal, and the Maloja; they ascended towards Pontresina, the Roseg glacier, and the Morteratch glacier, towards Samaden and Celerina. The departure of the five or six carriages of Madame Lawrence towards the Maloja was impressive. She was in the first in a completely white costume with face and head enveloped in a close green veil, but so transparent that the large grey-blue eyes and the golden hair, strikingly combed into big tresses, were well discernible.

As for Frau Mentzel's party, her stage-coach and other equipages had ascended and descended three times from St. Moritz Bad to St. Moritz Dorf, with a great flourish of horns, to pick up people, but in reality to attract attention. However, it was all done so late that they would never reach the Fexthal glacier, and, at the most, the restaurant for tea. Still that sufficed.

Donna Mercédès de Fuentes, as she descended in her

large landau towards the Maloja, experienced a heart-burning at seeing the equipage of Her Royal Highness, the reigning Princess of Salm, directed towards "Belvoir," where, it seemed, Her Royal Highness had invited ten or a dozen French, English, German, and Italian ladies, actually the ten or twelve noblest of the noble. Also the carriage of Her Royal Highness, the Grand Duchess of Gotha, was directed up above ; but she was not going to tea. She was going to Celerina, as she did each day, to visit the great doctor who lived there. The Grand Duchess was ill, but to deceive herself into feeling better she went to the doctor daily. And Donna Mercédès de Fuentes registered a vow to herself that if ever she were ill in the Engadine, she would only allow herself to be healed by the doctor of the Grand Duchess at Celerina.

A great moral laziness had seized Lucio Sabini on that second portion of the day. Two or three telephone calls had invited him to go in gay and amiable society to two or three different places, and two or three easy excuses had served him to decline the invitations—the Roseg glacier, a boating party on the Lake of the Maloja, a visit to Friedrich Nietzsche's house at Sils Maria. All were excuses to meet once more, after a hundred times, people already known ; to talk on the way, without ever looking where they were passing, of the incidental things of the day before, and of the days before that, and then to finish, not before the colossal wall of a glacier, not in a poetical crossing of a lonely lake amidst the lofty black mountains, not before a little garden of rose bushes, geraniums, and yellow marguerites, that the eyes of the poet of Zarathustra had seen born and perish, from May to September, at Sils Maria, but at tea-tables laden with toast, cakes and pastry and plates of confectionery at the restaurants half-way between the glaciers, in the smart *latterie*, in the halls of large hotels,

and vestibules of small hotels. "Glaciers, lakes, hills, large tracts, villages," thought Lucio Sabini, in a bad temper; "all little excuses to wrap up in a large veil and drive in a carriage, speaking ill of worthy people and beautiful things—and to take tea!"

However, to conquer his attack of misanthropy, after lunch he went for a stroll along the road, to excuse himself again to those whose invitation he had refused, to greet some more sympathetic and elect acquaintance, and to watch some unknown faces passing, those solitary faces that attracted him powerfully. What a lot of people he had seen thus, climbing, descending, and stopping half-way, and setting out again in the early hours of the afternoon, as he quietly came and went to the "Palace" and the "Badruth," stopping and chatting with everyone, foregathering with some friend just about to leave, commenting with irony and sometimes with bitterness on certain bizarre, clamorous and scandalous events. But still all this giddy worldliness had not excited him. Gradually he saw everyone he knew and did not know pass up and down; then a dominant thought, at first vague and uncertain, afterwards more insistent, mastered him. At noon, on entering his hotel, at the porter's box, he had read a notice in German that the day before a lady's silver purse had been lost in the gardens near the tennis court, and it was requested that the purse should be returned for a reward to the porter of the Hôtel Kulm.

"An hotel for American and English women," he thought at once. "This Lilian will be a governess of fifty, with a maroon veil to her hat. She will give me a dollar for a reward in exchange for her purse." And he laughed at his little romance.

Moreover, when, through a singular and inexplicable motive of fastidiousness, he had refused all the invitations that would have carried him far away from the

Hôtel Kulm, and had seen the great crowd set off gradually, excited by another experience and the life in the open air, but seated in carriages beneath rugs and veils ; when he found himself alone, he was again conquered by the desire of finding and knowing her who had lost the silver purse. He thought himself sometimes puerile and sometimes downright grotesque. But he believed in opportunity ; so a little later he watched the simpler, modest, and unknown people set off on foot through the Alpine paths to the Meierei, to Waldschlossli, to Oberalpina or Unteralpina, all those who were fond of walking or could not afford to spend money on carriages, and he saw them disappear along the roads and lanes, beneath the trees, or across the tall grass. Towards four o'clock he observed that the broad roads and paths were becoming almost deserted, and silence and peace to be enveloping St. Moritz Bad and St. Moritz Dorf. Then it was that slowly he took the path that leads from the central place of the Dorf, where the tram stops, to the Engadine " Kulm."

He thought : " Probably this Lilian is very ugly ; but surely she has a beautiful soul. What does it matter ? I shall be very polite to her for some minutes."

On arriving at the big door of the " Kulm " he entered slowly, to make inquiries from the porter, as if it were of no consequence.

" The person who has lost the silver purse," replied the porter at once, " is Miss Temple."

" Ah," said Lucio, " and is Miss Temple in the hotel ? "

" No, she has gone out for a walk. You can leave the purse with me."

" No ; I would rather return. Do you know where Miss Temple has gone ? "

" She has gone out as usual with her friend, Miss Ford. I believe they have gone towards Chasselas."

"Towards Chasselas? Two single ladies? Both young?" As a matter of fact he waited for the reply with secret trepidation.

"One is young, the other is not."

And Lucio Sabini, like a boy, or a student, did not want to, and did not know how to, ask anything else. He turned his back, left the hotel, and stopping for a moment, he tried to remember the way that leads from the Dorf to Chasselas. It was a walk, at a good pace, of about three-quarters of an hour. He believed in opportunity. He set out; but he had not walked three minutes before he met a group of people, one of whom greeted him with a smile. Mrs. Clarke and Miss Mabel Clarke were climbing towards the Golf Club accompanied by various men. The graceful American girl, with her slender and flexible figure, was walking well in front, in a light grey dress, her little head crowned with a hat surrounded by roses, beneath which her chestnut hair surged in rebellious waves, breaking over the white forehead and covering the tips of the little pink ears. Beside her was Don Vittorio Lante della Scala, and the two were carrying on a friendly and lively conversation, as they looked and smiled at each other, Vittorio Lante with sweet and serious eyes, together with that quick virile smile that is a grace in an Italian face. Behind came Mrs. Clarke in a very fashionable and rich dress, certainly too rich to go to tea at the Golf Club. On her old lace cravat shone a solitary jewel, to wit, a small thread of gold from which were hanging, like drops, two enormous emeralds shaped like pears. On her head was the large hat with the feather that the more mature American women delight in at all hours of the day and night. Mrs. Clarke's countenance was, as usual, calm and inexpressive, with Mabel's fine features which had become gross and fat. Beside her was the Marquis de Jouy, a young Frenchman, very

brilliant and witty, full of pretensions, whose fixed idea was to speak well of all countries save his own, and constantly to speak ill of France ; thereby he thought himself most original. His latest caprice was for America and Americans ; he sought them out everywhere, going into ecstasies at every speech and every act of theirs. There was also the Vicomte di Loewe, a Belgian, a most ardent and fortunate gambler, who always attached himself to gamblers of both sexes who were rich and inexperienced ; and two or three other Austrian and French gentlemen, all more or less courtiers of the mother or daughter, for diverse objects, but whose sole magnet as a matter of fact was the Clarke money.

Lucio Sabini stopped for a moment, as he smiled at Vittorio Lante : with an expressive glance he questioned, approved, and congratulated discreetly. With a single glance Vittorio also answered, thanked, and hoped discreetly. The two friends understood each other without any of the bystanders having understood. The Clarke party pursued its way towards the Golf Club, while Lucio Sabini set out for the Wald Promenade, a path that dominates the main road from St. Moritz Dorf to Campfer, and that guards St. Moritz Bad from on high amidst the trees. It was a little path now entirely discovered to view, showing the country down below with a lake that seemed much smaller, like a silver cup, beneath a sky that was growing white as the day declined, now hidden by dense foliage of large bushes and trees. At that hour in which all had reached their goal, in which carriages and people were in front of the restaurants, and in the *latterie* and hotel saloons, ladies, with veils unloosed, were carrying cups of tea to their lips, while the men were eating buttered toast ; in that declining hour of the day not a soul was traversing the Wald Promenade. Lucio Sabini hurried, though he

smiled at his haste, as he thought that perhaps, no certainly, he would never meet Miss Lilian Temple and her friend, who quite likely had not even gone to Chasselas or had taken another way, or would take another way thence to return to the Dorf; whom perhaps he would not recognise as he did not know them, for he could not ask all the ladies he should meet if they were Miss Lilian Temple and Miss Ford. But that day—why, he knew not—he believed ever more firmly in Destiny. Suddenly the path inclined, the trees became scarcer: the Wald Promenade, the walk in the wood, ended, and he saw at once that he could not be very far from Chasselas.

The day continued to decline. Already the sun was hidden between the two lofty snow peaks, between the proud Monte Albana and the majestic Julier. Much further to right and left the more modest heights of the Polaschin and the gentle Suvretta at that first hour of sunset had become light and transparent beneath the pearlsh-grey sky. In front of him Lucio saw the broad road that he had followed parallely, which starts from the Dorf, incline below, all white behind a promontory, as it goes towards Campfer. To his right a small, green, open valley climbed in a pleasant curve, with scarcely sloping meadows crowned with small hedges and trees, towards a little group of white houses. To the left a large grassy bank, leafy and very dense, hid the rumbling course of the Inn with its rocks, and the road that returned to St. Moritz Bad. Further below the scene opened out, giving a glimpse of the little lake of Campfer with the village nestling on its shore, then a large tongue of land, and much further still the lake of Silvaplana, and further off, but imposing with its two white peaks, was the Margna covered with eternal snow.

Lucio stood and watched. He remembered now that

those little white houses up there on the ascending little valley were Chasselas. He looked again, beyond and around. It was the point where the four roads divide ; in fact the four sign-posts were a little further on, with their little red flags picked out in white with four inscriptions. If Miss Temple had gone to Chasselas, and if she had not already returned thence, she must pass there. A fountain hard by was singing its little water song. There was a seat there : he sat down. Some people passed as they came from Chasselas : first two Germans, husband and wife, the one in front, the other behind, with gymnastic step, both red in the face and taciturn, the wife with a black skirt held up by some elastic bands ; then came a nursemaid who was hurrying with her two little ones ; then no one else. The day declined.

Suddenly, as he looked a little ahead, Lucio perceived a small white wall encircling a field : a little open gate joined together the two sides of the small wall. This little wall was so low that flowers with long stems showed themselves above it, bright flowers that bent themselves slightly to the evening wind. He thought that it might be one of the numerous pretty and flourishing gardens which surround the little villas and houses of Switzerland ; but he perceived neither villa nor house. Instead he discovered amidst the clusters of flowers some white stones. Then he understood that, without seeking for it, he had found a little cemetery, the little cemetery of St. Moritz Dorf, far from habitation, perched aloft behind a wood, a little cemetery all flowery, gracious, and solitary. Immediately afterwards he saw, along the wall, two feminine forms leaning over to look at the modest tombs so well surrounded by groups of little plants and brightly coloured flowers. The two ladies were separated from each other by a few paces, and they were watching silently.

"Miss Temple?" asked Lucio Sabini of the first lady, taking off his hat.

A serious face already touched by years turned to him. The lady replied in a low voice :

"No, sir." And turning towards her companion, she called out in English :

"Darling !"

The other came forward at once.

"Miss Temple?" asked Lucio Sabini again.

The young woman raised her eyes of purest blue, whence emanated a sweet light ; a slight blush coursed beneath the transparent skin of her virginal face, and she replied :

"Yes, sir."

A long minute of silence followed. The three were standing near the beautiful, little, solitary cemetery, where had been sleeping in the high mountains for years, or months, or days, unknown men, women, and children ; the flowers were hardly bowing over the stones, which were becoming even whiter in the sunset.

"I beg pardon," murmured Lucio, recovering his composure. "I have to restore you something, Miss Temple."

"My purse—really!" she exclaimed, advancing a little, somewhat anxiously.

"Here it is, *miss*."

And drawing the precious object from his pocket he gave it to Miss Lilian Temple. The beautiful eyes glanced with sweetness, and the mouth, so perfect, smiled ; the little hand clasped the recovered object, as if to caress it.

"Thank you, sir," she added.

Then she stretched out the little hand that was free, gloved in white. He took it lightly and kept it but for a moment in his own, then he released it with a deep bow.

Miss May Ford, silent, indifferent, strange, waited. Now all three were silent, while for a long time Lucio Sabini fixed his eyes on the enchanting face for which the blond hair made a soft aureole. At last he said, with a courteous smile :

" Did not Miss Temple promise a reward to whomsoever brought back her purse ? "

The girl, marvelling a little, raised her eyebrows, questioning the Italian gentleman without speaking.

" Lucio Sabini asks her, as reward, to be allowed to accompany her now as far as the ' Kulm.' "

" Certainly, sir," replied the girl at once in a frank way. " My dear friend, Miss May Ford, Signor Lucio Sabini."

The elderly English lady replied with cold courtesy to the greeting of Don Lucio Sabini. And without giving another glance to the surrounding country, which was enveloping itself in the finest tints, from a delicate violet to the most delicate green, the three withdrew from the quiet cemetery and proceeded silently along the broad high road that leads to the Dorf. Lilian Temple's step was rather quick, and Lucio Sabini adapted his to the girl's. Miss May Ford went more slowly.

" Are you glad, Miss Temple, to have found your purse ? " he began to say in his insinuating voice that in French became even more penetrating.

" So glad : I am very grateful to you, Signor."

" You valued it, then ? "

" Very much."

" Perhaps it was a souvenir, or a gift ? " he ventured to ask, scrutinising those beautiful blue eyes.

But the girl lowered her eyelids ; she did not reply.

He understood that he had asked too much ; they were silent for a little.

" Do you know Italy, Miss Temple ? " he resumed.

"I know Italy ; not all, though," she replied, again courteously. "I hope to see it all later on."

"And do you like our country, Miss Temple ?"

"Yes, Signor," she murmured, her voice a little veiled.

Again their eyes met and fixed each other for an instant, as they both walked a little ahead.

"Which city pleased you most, Miss Temple ?" he asked, bending towards her, lowering his voice still more.

"Florence," she replied.

"Florence ; I ought to have guessed it !"

"Why guess it ?"

"Didn't you write a verse from Dante in your pocket-book ?" he asked, looking fixedly at her.

"Then you read my pocket-book ?" she exclaimed, stopping, confused and hurt.

"Why, yes ! Have I done wrong, Miss Temple ?"

She bent her head ; her mouth became serious and almost severe, and she hurried her step.

"Have I really done so wrong, Miss Temple ?" he asked, this time with genuine anxiety.

She shook her head without replying ; her gentle face had already become sweet again.

"Anyone would have read that pocket-book, Miss Temple," he added, quite sadly.

"Not an Englishman, Signor," she said in a low voice.

"That is true, not an Englishman ; but an Italian, yes," he replied. "Our fantasy is as ardent as our hearts. You must understand us to excuse us, Miss Temple."

"It doesn't matter, Signor," she replied seriously, with a little smile of indulgence. "I know Italy, but not Italians. If they are as ardent as you say, it no longer matters having read my pocket-book, Signor."

"And you will pardon an Italian who confesses his fault, and is very sorry for it ?" he asked in that

penetrating tone of his, where always there seemed to be deep emotion.

Miss Lilian Temple looked at him an instant, furtively.

"Oh, yes, Signor; I pardon you willingly."

And gracefully, with a spontaneous, youthful gesture, she again offered him her hand, as if rancour could not exist in her gentle soul. At such ingenuous kindness the man, over whose mind had passed such fearful tempests, leaving their ineffaceable traces, felt a tremor of complacency, as he pressed that little hand, which was given him without hesitation and so sincerely.

It grew darker. A pungent breath of wind arose, whirling and causing the trees to rustle. The two ladies wanted to put on their coats, which up to then they had carried on their arms, and Lucio performed the gallant duty of helping both of them, then he exchanged some words with Miss May Ford, the elderly lady who kept silent with such English dignity.

He, however, with his constant desire of conquest, instead of returning her speech in French, as he had done with Miss Temple, had the politeness to speak in English, a tongue that he spoke slowly, but with certainty and some elegance.

Upon the rather severe and purposely impassive face of Miss Ford, there appeared for the first time a gracious expression. Now the three walked together, Lucio having Miss Ford on his right and Lilian Temple on the other side of her friend: all three talked English. A sudden wind that was becoming rough revolved in whirling circles. On the road by which they were pursuing their return, and on which they still more hurried their steps, there was a continuous returning of all the equipages which three hours previously had left the Dorf for Sils, Fexthal, the Maloja, and which to get home more quickly were returning at a lively trot from the Campfer road towards the Dorf. In the carriages

the women had put on their large, dark cloaks, and the white and light dresses of the early hours of the afternoon, all joyous in the sun, had vanished: cold and silent, they wrapped themselves in their cloaks. Some had buried their necks in thick fur stoles, and the large, flowing veils had been closed round the hats, and tied round the neck in ample knots, like large handkerchiefs or scarves.

The men had put on their overcoats, raising the collars, and they had lowered the flaps of their soft felt hats. In many of the carriages the broad rugs, some white and soft, others striped like tiger skins, had been spread. On all who were returning there was seemingly a feeling of weariness. The women lolled well back in the seats of the carriage, some with the head thrown back a little as if to repose, others with bowed forehead, but all were silent, with their white-gloved hands lost in the large sleeves of their cloaks or hidden beneath the carriage rug; the men had that air of weariness and boredom that ages the physiognomy of the youngest. All were weary through having once again chattered vainly of vain things, through having flirted with trite and cold words, with accustomed and banal actions; they were tired of all this, but without wishing to confess it and attributing their weariness to the open air, in which they were unaccustomed to live for so many hours. They were ready, when they had passed along the road now beaten by the strong, gelid evening wind, and had reached the warmth of their hotels, amidst the shining lights, to resume the same conversations, and begin again the same flirtations, till the night was advanced.

Now all were silent and bored: the women were almost pallid beneath their veils, the tints of which were becoming uniform in the rapidly increasing dusk.

The men, no longer gracious, were glad to be silent, being desirous of arriving quickly at their hotels. Thus

they passed at a brisk trot, and the three wayfarers had repeatedly to avoid them. Suddenly the carriage of Madame Lawrence, that year's beauty, passed, followed by four or five others. She had placed over her white dress a large, round cloak without sleeves, of a very dark red cloth, and to be original she had taken off the immense hat covered with a large green veil, and had drawn over her head the dark red hood trimmed with old silver lace. From the back of this hood appeared her calm and thoughtful beauty, the large eyes, clear and penetrating, gleamed, and the blond tresses, braided round the head in Florentine fashion, caused her in that red cloak, so like a soldier's tunic of olden times, and beneath that hood, to look like the woman whom the Italian poet loved. Miss Temple followed her with a long stare and then glanced at Lucio Sabini.

"Do you like Madame Lawrence?" asked Miss Ford.

"She is beautiful; but I don't like her," he replied.

"Why?" asked Miss Temple.

"I prefer the violets," replied Lucio, with a smile.

"Violets, Signor?" again questioned the girl.

"The modest beauties, Miss Temple. The beauties who hide themselves."

"Ah," she replied, without further remark.

They had almost reached the "Kulm," when a group of four men came towards them on foot. They emerge from a path that tortuously descends and re-climbs a small valley towards the end of the village. They were Don Giovanni Vergas, an Italian gentleman of a great Southern family, seventy years of age, with a still lively physiognomy, in spite of a fine, correctly cut white beard; Monsieur Jean Morel, a Frenchman, a Parisian, an old man of eighty, slender of figure, shrivelled and upright, with a clean-shaven face, furrowed with a thousand wrinkles, but on which physical strength was still to be read; Herr Otto von Raabe, a German from

Berlin, a man of forty, tall, bony, and imposing, with a brown and haggard face, a little black, bristling beard, streaked with white, and two blue eyes, blue as blue-bottle flowers and the sky, and finally Massimo Granata, a Southern Italian, with a thin, yellowish face that could never have known youth, with a body all twisted with the rickets. He was already advanced in years, and invalided by a long, slow, incurable disease; his glance scintillated with goodness and intelligence, and a dreamy expression was in all his countenance.

The well-cut boots of Don Giovanni Vergas and the Parisian, Jean Morel, were covered with dust, as also were the big stout boots of Otto von Raabe and Massimo Granata. All four, in costume and bearing, had the appearance of having walked far. The German carried a large bundle of Alpine flowers, formed of wild geraniums, fine and rosy, bluebells long of stalk, and tall green grasses streaked with white, and his face every now and then was bent over the mountain flowers. Massimo Granata pressed to his bosom a bunch of gentians, some dark, some light, of a dark and pale violet, and of a violet-blue. The meeting with the four was for a moment only: their words were rapid and joyous.

"Where have you been?" asked Lucio Sabini.

"On high, on high," exclaimed Jean Morel vivaciously.

"To the Alp Nova," replied Don Giovanni Vergas, with a smile.

"Four hours climbing and descending," continued Otto von Raabe, with a very German guttural accent, and a kind smile on his large mouth.

"And we have all these beautiful flowers, Sabini, these beautiful gentians," concluded Massimo Granata, as if in a dream.

They greeted each other and vanished. Lucio followed them for a moment with his eyes.

" They do not come from a restaurant," he murmured, as if to himself.

" What do you mean, Signor ? " asked Miss Temple, looking at him with her beautiful eyes that questioned so ingenuously.

" These friends of mine, Miss Temple, have all of them been far on high to-day, all of them, even the oldest and the invalid."

He spoke as in a dream, in the evening that had already fallen.

" And they gathered those blue and violet flowers," added Miss Temple, thoughtfully and dreamily.

There was a little silence.

" The mountain flowers are so beautiful," continued the English girl ; " and the mountains themselves are so near to heaven."

" Would you like to climb up there, Miss Temple ? "

" Yes, Signor ; even where there are no flowers, even where there are only rocks and eternal snows," she added mysteriously, with lowered eyes.

That white, cold, pure vision remained in her beautiful eyes when she took leave of Lucio Sabini and disappeared with her friend into the hall of the Hôtel Kulm. Alone, in the dark evening, he was surrounded by the cold wind, and all his soul was invaded by an unknown, inexplicable, and mortal sadness.

CHAPTER V

"MAY I come in, mamma?" asked the fresh, sonorous voice of Mabel Clarke at the closed door.

"Come in, dearie," replied the soft and expressionless voice of her mother from within.

Mabel entered and with her eyes sought her mother in the spacious room.

"I am here, dearie," murmured her mother, even more softly. Annie Clarke lay stretched upon a large sofa that filled up a whole corner of the room; her head, which had been carefully dressed and the hair passed discreetly through henna, was leaning in a tired way on a pillow of oriental stuff covered with quaint, old lace. A pure white bear-skin, stretched over her knees, covered the edge of the sofa and fell on the ground like a soft white carpet. Around Annie Clarke, on the great bear-skin, on a table beside her, on little tables placed within her reach, were a hundred different objects; a writing-case with everything necessary for writing, a row of flasks and little bottles for salts, scents, and medicines; bundles of unopened reviews, bundles of uncut books, manicure-case, silver and gold boxes of all dimensions for cipria, pastes and pins; paper-knives, another *nécessaire* for opening letters, a large glass filled with a milky drink, wherein was immersed a golden spoon, and close to her right hand was a silver-gilt pear studded with turquoises—the electric bell. But Annie Clarke performed none of these operations, since Mrs. Broughton or Fanny, the trusted maid, before leaving

her had gathered around her whatever might be useful to her. There was Annie Clarke, impassive, tranquil ; not sad, not happy, perhaps not even thoughtful. On the third finger of her right hand shone an enormous diamond, a most rare jewel ; but she wore no other jewels. With a smile Mabel Clarke drew near her mother and bent her head over her. Annie gave a fleeting kiss to her daughter's flowing, rebellious locks, and then offered a smooth and expressionless cheek to be kissed.

" How are you, mammy ? "

" I am cold, dearie."

" Cold ? "

" Very cold."

Mabel threw a glance at the broad window that almost cut off one of the walls of that room in the " Palace," and which looked out over the lake. In the peculiar frame of light wood which the opened shutters formed and that really seemed like the frame of a vast picture, behind the shining windows, right opposite there was to be seen, but extraordinarily near, a huge mass of the deepest green, the dense wood of Acla Silva, which no house or cottage disturbs. Over the virgin wood a fringe of brightest, almost shimmering blue—the sky ; beneath the wood a fringe of steel-blue, motionless and scintillating—the lake. And everything was enveloped and penetrated by the purest light.

" The weather is so beautiful," added Mabel in a harmonious voice. " You are cold because you do not go out."

" I am not a *sport* like you, Mabel. You know that," exclaimed Annie, shaking her head.

" *Ah, que j'adore ce pays !*" exclaimed the beautiful girl suddenly in French, with a strong American accent ; and the exclamation bubbled forth like a cry of joy, as she smiled delightfully.

" You are right," murmured her mother tranquilly.

Full of joy, Mabel Clarke's large grey eyes, the large enchanting eyes of an almost infantile grey, rested in rapture upon the bright window, where the landscape appeared strangely circumscribed, formed by the immaculate and intense green of the wood, the pureness of the sky, and motionless waters, while the wood, sky, and lake were wrapped in light. Mabel's tall and comely figure and every line and feature of the graceful face breathed youth, serenity, and joy of living. Instead of one of her usual tailor-made dresses, from the round skirts of which were always to be seen the long, well-booted feet, the jacket a little long and angular, allowing one to guess at the flexible lines of her figure, she wore a dress of white cambric, of French style, all fringed and inserted with lace, a soft, rather long dress, with a sash of ivory silk. On her head, instead of one of those round hats with straight brim and a feather like a dagger which completes the Anglo-American tailor-made dress, she wore a large coif hat, trimmed with white cambric, the coif of Charlotte Corday, tied with a sky-blue ribbon, with a large bow at the side. Her parasol and shoes were white, as were her gloves and purse.

"You look very nice, Mabel," said her mother, after gazing and smiling an instant at her dear daughter's figure in the white dress.

"*Pour le bon Dieu, chère maman,*" exclaimed the daughter, smiling, and showing her white teeth.

"Are you going to collect in church this morning, dearie? Did you accept, then?"

"Oh, mother! How can one say no to the Archduchess? She takes such an interest in the Catholic church."

"So do we, Mabel; in fact in all Catholic churches. And we are very interested in the Pope!" Annie added with some vivacity. "Did you tell the Archduchess that?"

"Of course I told her."

"Is the Archduchess Vittoria to collect with you?"

"Why, yes!"

"Try to collect more money than she does, Mabel."

"I will try to. Won't you give me something, too, in church?"

"I am not going, dearie. I am tired and cold. I will give it you now and you shall place the money in your plate."

Feeling on the large sofa Annie Clarke found her cheque-book, and drew out her gold pen. Mechanically, on her knees, she wrote a figure on a cheque, almost without looking, signed it, detached the leaf lightly, and, after blotting it, gave it to her daughter.

"Four hundred dollars, Mabel. But there are few rich Catholics here. All the rich people are Jews," murmured Annie Clarke, with a disparaging sneer. "Shall you collect alone?"

"Oh, no; each of us has a companion."

"Who accompanies the Archduchess Vittoria?"

"Comte de Roy, the little Count."

"And you? Don Vittorio Lante, I suppose, my dear?"

"Naturally," replied the girl frankly.

"You are very much in love with him, it seems to me, Mabel."

"Very much."

"He is a nice young man," said Annie Clarke, in a low voice; "I believe he has no fortune."

"I believe so, too, mammy."

"Have you already obtained information about that?"

"No, mammy, I have had no information about it," said the girl discreetly, "but I suppose it."

They spoke quietly, looking each other in the eyes, without a shadow of hesitation in voice or words.

"Are you already engaged to him, Mabel?" Annie Clarke asked, after a minute's silence.

The bright face, where so much youthful beauty smiled, became, as it were, veiled by a very light cloud, which disappeared at once.

"Not yet," the girl replied.

"However, you could tie yourself?" asked the mother.

"Perhaps I could," replied the girl thoughtfully.

"Don't do it without warning me, Mabel, my dear."

"Of course I will not do so without warning you," said the daughter.

Again the rosy face beneath the large white coif, beneath the rebellious chestnut hair, bent to kiss the maternal cheek. Annie Clarke contented herself with giving a little tap of the hand on her daughter's shoulder, as an apology for a caress, and followed her with her eyes as she withdrew.

CHAPTER VI

IN the Catholic church of St. Moritz Bad the first Mass on a Sunday is said at six. The bell of the rather lofty tower sounded the call to the faithful once only, and feebly, as if a discreet hand measured the sound at that early morning hour. The valley was full of a fleeting white mist that concealed the mountains far and near, that billowed over the large, deserted meadows near the church, rendering their grass soft with water and glistening with flowers ; it billowed amidst the large hotels, closed and silent, and in the deserted and silent streets of the Bad. The sun, which much later would cause the white morning mist of the Engadine to vanish, had not yet emerged from behind the quaint Piz Languard. The cold was keen and the atmosphere of an equal shade, greyish white and very soft.

Slowly, but continuously, the church filled from top to bottom, in its great central nave and two side aisles, which are really two long and straight corridors, with a taciturn, cautious, and respectful congregation of the faithful. They were the Engadine villagers and woodmen, men and women in their Sunday clothes, all of which were dark, in heavy grey cloth, maroon, and deep blue : the women with head hidden in a dark kerchief, faces with an opaque colouring, warmed with red, crowned with chestnut hair with streaks of lightish red, eyes of a milky blue, very pale and without gleam. There were labourers from all the railway, street, and

house works which they were constructing in the neighbourhood, in the near and far distance. There were people of other districts and climes, who every Sunday, even in winter, over snow and ice, walked mile upon mile to come and hear Mass, and who even now, in summer, had put up with great inconvenience to reach St. Moritz Bad at six in the morning, afterwards to depart again immediately. There were Lombards, Venetians, Romagnians, and Calabrians; workmen in their clean clothes and large boots who bowed to the altar with the usual act of homage of their own districts and far-off villages, and who went to seat themselves by the villagers in profound silence, neither greeting nor speaking, and like the countrymen and woodmen on the benches in front, bending their heads at once to pray.

There were men and women of the *bourgeoisie*, assistants at the bazaars, who had not yet opened their shops, saleswomen at the curiosity shops, chambermaids from the hotels, little players in the orchestra, washerwomen, starchers, seamstresses, domestic servants of employers who would still sleep deeply for two or three hours; all workers, in fact, who had risen so early to be able to assist at the Mass, since later, at the second Mass at eight, the work would already have begun in its briskness and intensity; while at eleven, the hour of High Mass, none of them would have an instant more of liberty. Even all these toilers of the luxury, pleasure, and intoxication of life, these humble, unknown workers were there in cast-off clothes, with faces still pale from interrupted sleep, with the tired air of those who are deprived of rest; but each of them stood at his place in church, without troubling about his neighbour, seized by the intimate need of that moment of recollection and liberty of spirit.

The Mass of the country people, workers, and servants

proceeded in perfect simplicity and great rapidity. It was said by one of the three priests who compose the summer Mission of St. Moritz Bad, which comes from Coire, sent by the Bishop every year in the month of May to remain there till the end of September. He was the least known of the three priests, since the chief one reserved for himself the eleven o'clock Mass, in which he could speak to the varied cosmopolitan society. Before the Gospel the organ played ponderously, but only for a brief space, and there was no singing. Interrupting the Mass as usual, the celebrant climbed the pulpit very hurriedly, and after an instant of silent prayer, he explained that Sunday's Gospel, in which he spoke of the parable of the good servant, that is of time that one must place to good use for the welfare of the Christian soul, and of which the Lord later would demand strict account.

In truth, villagers, workmen, servants, and workers of every class listened with immense attention, without almost moving an eyebrow, to the severe words, too severely commented upon, about the *use of time*; and here and there on many faces there were traces of old and daily fatigues, traces of old and daily privations, there seemed to be an anxiety and a fear of not having worked enough, of not having suffered enough. Here and there some faces appeared to be inundated with sadness, so that when the priest finished the commentary on the day's Gospel with a hasty benediction, they were bowed full of compunction on the benches. Lower down some women, in the shade, hid their faces in their hands to pray, and showed only their bent shoulders in their modest black wove dresses. When the first tinkling of the bell announced that the moving mystery of the Host was beginning, there was a great movement in the church. The seats and benches were moved, for there was not a single one of these villagers, workpeople, and servants

who did not bow the knee before the mystic majesty of that which was about to happen. And when the triple tinkling of the bell and the sound of the organ announced that the mystery was at its culmination of beatitude, there were nothing but prostrate bodies and prone heads in the Catholic church of St. Moritz Bad.

But at the end of the Gospel, explained from the pulpit, the celebrant had added a few words that they should give alms to the church. The faithful were reminded that many years ago there was not a shadow of a Catholic church in the valley, and that to get a Mass they had been forced to make an even more fatiguing and severe walk in winter and summer ; that the Catholic church had been built, that it had so many debts that the good children ought to give something to alleviate these obligations. During the second Gospel, a workman rose from his place, crossed himself before approaching the altar, and taking a bronze plate, began to make the collection, person by person. Before offering the plate he searched in his pocket and gave his offering, an Italian coin of twenty centesimi—a nickel. With lowered eyes he quietly offered the plate to the other workers, peasants, servants, chambermaids, and domestics. Each gave with lowered eyes five or ten centimes in Italian, French, or Swiss money. Each gave not more than a soldo or two, but soon the plate was full of this heavy money, come from all those poor pockets of poor men and women who felt the benefit of having a church every Sunday, to pray and tell God how great was their sorrow ; so they wished to give their obol to their church.

The workman who was collecting, a Calabrian with a huge silver watch-chain, and a waistcoat of maroon velvet, explored even the two side corridors, in the most obscure corners, and tenaciously asked of each. Then after a profound genuflection to the altar he went

to the sacristy to deposit the collection of all the poor people. The Mass ended without other music than the two pieces which had accompanied the first Gospel and the Elevation. After a moment of hesitation, crossing themselves broadly towards the altar, the people began to leave the church, still in silence, and some before leaving genuflected again. They formed no groups and clusters to chatter in front of the church, by the swift river which gaily runs to precipitate itself into the lake. Everybody left by the central path along the Inn, the peasants and workpeople with slow, equal, heavy step ; the servants, chambermaids, toilers of the hotels, *cafés*, and restaurants with a lighter and more rapid step. The white, dense Engadine mist had in the meantime become less dense and was brightened by a light of interior gold. The sun gradually appeared behind Piz Languard, and all the atmosphere grew lighter and still more soft. The air was keenly cold, the soft meadows covered with flowers which led to the Bad were deserted, the shops and the windows and balconies of the hotels were closed ; and once more the roads were deserted when the peasants and workers and servants from every part had vanished.

The bell for High Mass, the eleven o'clock Mass, in the Catholic church at St. Moritz Bad rings three times to warn the faithful, at half-past ten, at a quarter to eleven, and at eleven. It is a proud and resounding peal that fills the fine Engadine air with its harmonies, now heavy, now sharp. The sonorous summons spreads itself afar in every part, to the highest villas, and to the most remote and solitary houses where anyone may be, so that he may turn his steps and hurry to church. At the first peal as yet no one appears along the level white paths amidst the vast green meadows, where the church

· rises which, all rude with its unpainted walls, still has a deserted and empty appearance, and which is situated in such a way that its foundations seem to be immersed in the still waters of the lake, where the swift and blue little Inn beats on one side as it rushes to precipitate itself into the lake. The belfry, so imposing that it almost overwhelms the church, trembles in vain from a peal that invokes the presence of the faithful. But at the second call slowly from every part, beneath a sun that makes the whole countryside irresistibly bright and gay, pass men, women, and children who are descending towards the church which, through an optical illusion, almost appears to be suspended above the clear waters of the lake. Continually from every part people arrive, now following the noisy course of the merry little Inn, now crossing it by the bridge, now arriving by the broad white ribbon, the road from the station and from St. Moritz Dorf to St. Moritz Bad. Now from the narrow white byways which descend abruptly amidst the verdure from the Dorf to the Bad, people keep arriving and group themselves in the small square before the church, and beneath the narrow portico with its slender little pillars, which seem to have been squashed out of the roof, waiting, chatting, and laughing—men, women, and children. All the women's dresses are for the most part brightly coloured or white, in cambric or fine cloth; also the children are dressed in white, and beneath their large hats their long hair appears on their shoulders in ringlets or waves. Some of the men are dressed fashionably, others with great simplicity. The crowd that is gradually formed outside and within the church, exquisitely dressed and adorned as if for the smartest society gathering, meets and greets, chatters and smiles, while but a single word circulates above the conversation, sometimes softly, sometimes aloud—respectfully, discreetly, curiously.

The Archduchess ! The Archduchess ! The Archduchess !

The Archduchess Maria Annunziata of Austria entered the church at the first stroke of the second summons, and crossed it completely with her rather rigid step. She was very tall and thin in her black dress, beneath a black hat which rested upon the thick white frame of her beautiful hair, while a very fine black veil scarcely threw a shadow on the face pale as ivory, on the black eyes, of a black as dense as coal, and the mouth pale as the pink of a withered rose. Maria Annunziata, Archduchess of Austria, quickly finds her place, because near the High Altar, more advanced than any other seat, are two arm-chairs of carved wood and two dark praying-stools, also of worked wood. The pious Austrian of the House of Hapsburg at once knelt down and began to pray. Her niece, a young girl of fifteen, the Archduchess Maria Vittoria, followed her into church step for step : already tall and slim, the young girl had the serene and proud face of the ladies of the Royal House. Maria Vittoria is very pale of countenance, and a large tress of very black hair descends upon her shoulders, which is tied with a bow of white ribbon. Her eyes are very black, without gleam, and proud ; her eyelids are often lowered, and with her long eyelashes they throw a shadow on her neck ; her fresh mouth has a prominent lower lip that augments the pride of the face. The handsome, faded aunt and the beautiful, quiet, and proud niece are very like each other.

Maria Vittoria is the only child by the first marriage of the Archduke Ludwig Salvator and the Archduchess Maria Immacolata, who had died tragically six years previously, from a fall from her horse, leaving the child of nine and a husband who did not weep for her, seeing that he had been separated from her and was already

living with a friend of hers, the Countess Margaret von Wollemberg, who, for that matter, he had at once marriedmorganatically, renouncing every eventual right to the Austrian throne, renouncing the Court, and even renouncing the right to see his daughter, Maria Vittoria.

Aunt and niece resemble each other. No one knows or remembers the old drama that saddened the youth of Maria Annunziata, and vowed her to celibacy and placed on her breast, on her black dress, the cross of an honorary abbess of a convent of Hungarian ladies. In spite of her deep religious piety, perhaps she still suffers ; but on her face there is no trace of sorrow ; there rests there composure and almost serenity. However, all know the atrocious doubt that fluctuates over the life of Maria Vittoria, to wit, that her mother did not die from an accident, but was killed, and all know of the father's desertion, that left her under the protection of her uncles and her aunt, like the most wretched among orphans of the people. But in Maria Vittoria's silence there is an immense pride, even when she kneels, as she bows her head beneath its rich black tresses.

Behind them the Catholic church is almost full, and by eleven o'clock it is fuller than it has ever been. For the past week among the Catholic ladies of Italy, France, and Austria a rumour has said that the Archduchess Maria Annunziata would attend High Mass at the Catholic church of St. Moritz Bad instead of hearing Mass by her chaplain at her Villa Silvana, as usual on Sundays, because she was interested in the church and wished people to come and make a large collection in aid of its necessities ; that she had permitted her niece, the Archduchess Maria Vittoria, to make the collection, and that even she had condescended to beg Miss Mabel Clarke, the beautiful and rich American girl—the girl of twenty, thirty, fifty millions dowry, the girl at whom all pointed, whom all wished to know, to whom each

one was anxious to be presented, and whom a hundred dowry-hunters sought in vain to conquer—to make the collection on that day with her niece—a Royal Princess, the niece and cousin of a King. Maria Vittoria of Austria and Mabel Clarke, the daughter of one of the many millionaires of Fifth Avenue, were to collect together! The church was fuller than ever it had been. At the offertory Lidia Smolenska, a Pole with a magnificent voice, was to sing, who never sang in public, and who had consented to do so in church through generosity of mind, although she was of a schismatic religion. Afterwards Comte André de Beauregard was to sing, a Frenchman of a great family, absolutely poor, with a treasure in his throat, who, however, dared not go on the stage, out of regard for his ancestors.

So the Catholic church of St. Moritz Bad, where every Sunday the ranks of the faithful are very thin at High Mass, when the two or three English Protestant churches are at the same time full to overflowing for Divine Service, when the Lutheran and Calvinist churches are crowded with Germans and Swiss psalmodising, when in the hotels, villas, and houses every Sunday at the same hour there remains the great Engadine crowd, to wit the great mass of Jews, this poor little Catholic church of St. Moritz Bad, which is always half empty—so few were the Catholics in the valley and so few the observing Catholics—on this Sunday is most full.

Frenchwomen of the old style have descended from the Dorf and come from the Bad, drawn by the summons of the Archduchess of Austria: the septuagenarian Duchesse d'Armaille, whose coquetry it is to affect old age, while her ancient fascination renews itself, as in a pleasant twilight of grace; the Duchesse di Langeais, who is a perfect prodigy of preservation as to beauty and figure at her uncertain age between forty and forty-five, laced in a dress that models her like a statue, and

moreover is still flexible ; *la Comtesse de la Ferté Guyon*, very pale, blond, bloodless, as if discreet shadows had spread over her person and attenuated her voice ; but she was still shut up in her incurable melancholy as in a tower of ivory ; the *Marquise di Fleury*, septuagenarian, implacably septuagenarian, beneath her yellow hair-dye, beneath the bistre of her expressionless eyes, beneath the rouge of her feeble cheeks and her stained lips, dressed outrageously in white, with a hat of flowers and no veil ; and *la grande bourgeoise*, *Madame Lesnay*, whose talent, knowledge of life, and fortune had settled her sons and daughter in marriage with the noblest houses of France, and the other *grande bourgeoise*, *Madame Soffre*, who had given two millions to her daughter so that she could marry the most eminent young French politician, to make of this daughter a future President's wife of the Republic. Many French girls had come there through a deep sense of curiosity and sadness to assist at the triumph of the American girl, one of those many girls who nowadays take away the lovers and husbands from the daughters of French aristocratic society.

From Dorf and Bad the Italian women had come to church, those who most frequent every Sunday the two Catholic churches ; also those have come who have heard the Mass at eight, as they wish to please the Archduchess : Lombard Marchionesses, tall, thin, with long necks, long and expressive faces, of a type a little equine, but with inborn lordly air, with toilettes rather severe, or absolutely eccentric ; magnificent Roman Duchesses, with delicate faces like finely cut medals, large, proud eyes, flowing tresses, and of noble bearing ; Princesses of the Two Sicilies, Naples and Palermo, some of rare and penetrating oriental beauty, with languishing and rather ardent eyes. All these Italian ladies are accompanied by their husbands, especially preceded or followed

by sons and daughters, young men or maidens, or children, boys and girls, three, four, or five, some as beautiful as the sun, forming admirable groups of freshness, laughter, and grace. These Italian women among their children have a protecting, maternal air which if it does not wholly destroy their womanly fascination, at least attenuates or straitens and transforms it: while the Frenchwomen also in church, even when praying or bowing their white foreheads on their hands, preserve all their womanly fascination. There is an enchanting smile on the mouths of the Frenchwomen, young, middle-aged, and old, that mingles even with the light movement of the lips as they pray, as if they wish to conquer *le bon Dieu*—as they always succeed in doing!

All the great Austrian ladies are here at the command of the Archduchess: the vivacious Hungarian, the Countess of Durckheim, celebrated for the extravagance of her life, but ever admired and loved in spite of it all; the Prinzessin von Sudenhorst, the great ambassadress, who had done so much for Austria and her husband, and who afterwards destroyed his fortune by publishing his memoirs, full of scandalous revelations and a spirit of cruelty against everyone; the most beautiful woman in Vienna, Frau Lehman, who was very rich since she was the wife of the most powerful brewer; the most beautiful girl in Vienna, Fräulein Sophie Zeller. Both maid and matron were very fair and rosy, with smiling eyes and large mouths, but slightly awkward in features and in dress, pretentious under an air of simplicity, though still quite pleasing. Beneath the shadow of the Archduchess was her great conquest, the young Baroness de Sluka, kneeling and praying, who a year ago was only a distinguished Jewess, Aline Kahn, but who by means of the Archduchess had been converted with great *éclat*: she had supported her at her baptism, and had also given her the title of Baroness, while the

neophyte had given a million to the Convent of the Annunciation, where she was baptised. On her knees, at the Archduchess's shoulder, the beautiful Baronin humbly bows her head and prays with exaggerated ardour, reading from a rich missal, covered with antique silver, with a book-marker of red ribbon and pious gold medals.

The American Catholic ladies are in a large group, almost all standing. The *very Catholic* are all more or less in short, tailor-made dresses with hats garnished with straight feathers. Nearly all are *misses* captained by Mabel Clarke's two dearest friends, who have come specially on horseback from Sils Maria to assist at the triumph of *darling Mabel*. The two horses of the West girls are in a corner of the church square, held by a groom who has tethered his horse to a paling.

The Mass begins.

"Two hundred millions dowry!" exclaims in a low voice, sighing vainly, the Vicomte de Lynen, a Belgian, after looking at the group, an unfortunate, but withal obstinate hunter after a dowry.

Around him, at the back of the church, there are other seekers after dowries, as if attracted together by a secret common desire. Come from Brussels, Paris, Florence, and everywhere, some spurred by a real need of readjusting their lives, others only to increase their luxury and their pleasures. Lynen is, as it were, their leader, and all of them, more or less young, some of them of grand name, all very fashionable, assume a sceptical air, that covers well their hidden interest. And in mountain clothes of great variety, from that of jacket and knickerbockers to white tennis flannels, from dark and subdued suits to the peculiar velvet of the *chasseur*, nearly all preserve the ingenuous and disinterested attitude of him who thinks only of enjoying life. Other men are scattered here and there, come at the order

of a lady whom they strive to obey, come to seek one who is escaping them, or come through duty and curiosity ; of every nation and condition, come as to a curious spectacle, as to a worldly invitation, to see the singular partnership of the Archduchess Maria Vittoria collecting with Mabel Clarke, to hear the two singers who so seldom allow themselves to be heard, the Smolenska, who is, in fact, a political exile, and who was consenting, schismatic as she was, to sing for the Roman Catholic church, and André de Beauregard—André whom the *impresarii* of New York were offering fantastic sums to make of him a rival to Caruso—while he was contemplating with melancholy the portrait of his ancestor slain at Malplaquet, or of another ancestor who was covered with glory at Fontenoy against the English. Nearly all the men are standing : there are no more seats. The caretaker of seats had his plate filled to overflowing with coins, such as he has never seen before. Standing, the men look around and turn every now and then, striving to discern who is entering and to distinguish which ladies are immersed in the gloom of the two narrow side aisles, and the mystery of certain veils which are too close.

“ Ah, Madame Lawrence is not here ! Then is it true that she is a Jewess, though she won’t confess it ? ”

“ No, no, she hurt her foot playing golf yesterday.”

“ But is she a Jewess ? ”

The Mass begins.

Mabel Clarke had entered a minute previously, dressed completely in white, her fresh, youthful face suffused with blushes beneath the white frame of her hat trimmed with cambric, which the dense mass of her hair raised and pressed back a little ; she carried a soft bunch of white lilies-of-the-valley in one hand. Her mother is not with her, nor is the faithful shadow of Mrs. Broughton.

She is accompanied by Don Vittorio Lante della Scala, who follows her step for step. Dressed in a dark blue suit, almost black, with the single bright and soft note of a pale yellow tie, in his sober smartness the young Italian aristocrat has a virile fascination together with delicacy and grace. As the two advance silently, but calmly and easily, their passage forward raises a murmur that creeps gradually through all the congregation.

Mabel Clarke, who is almost always used to hearing these whisperings on her passage, does not turn and has the appearance of not noticing them. Don Vittorio Lante seems to neither hear nor see, being intent on every action of the American girl he is accompanying. Mabel greets her American friends with a slight wave of the hand and a delightful smile, and reaching the top of the church looks for a place behind the two Archduchesses.

With difficulty she obtains a seat, and kneels for a moment. Vittorio Lante places himself most faithfully beside her, and they are shoulder to shoulder. While the priest at the altar makes the first genuflexion and whispers the first prayers, Mabel and Vittorio, bowing their heads to one another, carry on a conversation in a slight whisper.

All the crowd in the church is inattentive and distracted. Scarcely anyone follows the movements and acts of the priest at the altar. Many men and women raise themselves a little in their seats to watch the erect, proud, silent heads of the two Archduchesses. Others, the men especially, keep pointing at Mabel Clarke, who, smiling, distraught, and detached, turns her large grey eyes to those of Vittorio Lante, while he, with eyes fixed on her, distracted, seized, conquered, tells her things very softly, without ceasing to look and smile at her.

From the sides of the church men and women stretch towards the organ, which is at the back, to find out if Lidia Smolenska, the great singer, is there. A pale and serious face is to be seen up above, a very light coiffure beneath a feathered hat, which at once disappears, hidden by the balustrade of the organ. Mechanically people rise to their feet when the priest opens the Gospel. Some cross themselves through old custom, others in imitation ; very few make the three signs of the cross, on the forehead, lips, and heart, as the rite directs ; vice versa, as they are standing people end by turning to look around them, and almost to form groups.

But the priest has left the altar, and after a minute he reappears in the pulpit to explain the day's Gospel. All sit down more comfortably : they turn towards the pulpit and gradually become silent. In a gently pronounced French, with a soft accent, stretching out in pleasant circumlocutions, the parable of the day's Gospel is expounded, that of the master who asks an account from his servants of the way in which they have employed their time. With florid gestures the priest questions the crowd and does not wait for a reply ; he admonishes them, but tenderly, on the use of time, of that which has been done well and ill in ten years, in a year, in a day, in an hour. And he does it all in his insinuating and caressing French, so as not to oppress or frighten those who are listening to him, who have come from every part of the world, all of whom are very rich, or at least seem rich, all of whom are of high birth and origin, or at least bear great names, all these ladies who, as he sees and knows, cling to life—to a true or false youth, simple or artificial. Suddenly the priest heals with the balm of hope, in soft and rolling French, a certain light spiritual agitation that had risen in the souls of the crowd, at the doubt that they had badly used their time in enjoyment, vice, corruption, and

cruelty. But what does it matter, for here is a priest to promise them divine mercy in a French full of pardon and indulgence? So the congregation, which perhaps has not been agitated at all, and has never considered that it has sacrificed to the senses, to vice, and perdition, hears the tenderest absolution falling on its shoulders in the name of divine clemency; and it finds this unasked-for pardon and clemency suddenly coming in plenitude in the name of God. But the priest has not finished. In even more mellifluous French, full of *hélas* and sighs, he begs alms for the poor, very poor, church of St. Moritz Bad, which for years has been crushed by its building debt. The church has cost too much because of its campanile, which is a monument, and through want of money its interior is undecorated and mean; so the priest turns humbly, sighing and lamenting, *à ses très chers frères, à ses chères sœurs*, that the collection may give a substantial sum to the poor church of St. Moritz Bad. Then he disappears from the pulpit.

The great moment has arrived: everybody in church rises, turns, and cranes to watch. The couple who are to collect are about to begin their duties.

The Archduchess Maria Vittoria was the first to rise, followed by a beardless youth of eighteen, the Comte de Roy, a Frenchman, the son of an Austrian Princess, hence connected, if remotely, with the House of Austria. Maria Vittoria kneels a moment before the High Altar, then she takes from the hands of the Comte de Roy a silver plate. She advances to her aunt, the Archduchess Maria Annunziata, and makes her a profound curtsy, a Court curtsy, and stoops to kiss the long, skinny, white hand which places in the plate a large gold coin, a hundred-lire piece. Followed by the Comte de Roy, the fifteen-year-old girl, tall and slim, rather too tall and thin perhaps, like her great-aunt, enters among the congregation to the right of the High Altar. Maria

Vittoria does not smile, her proud mouth with the thick lower lip is closed tightly, her very thick opaque eyes scarcely fix themselves for a moment upon the person from whom she is asking alms. Coins of silver and gold fall with a tinkle into the plate ; she scarcely bows her head in thanks, and passes on, without looking at or turning to her cavalier who follows her. Curiosity about her is very soon exhausted ; the congregation examines her first with respect, then with indifference, and in some she awakes antipathy by her stiffness and sovereign pride. Quietly she crosses the church imprisoned in her thoughts and feelings. Her plate is covered with gold and silver coins, covered but not overflowing. She pays no heed to what is given her ; in fact, she moves and mingles with the congregation, without scarcely anyone bothering further about her.

Mabel Clarke also salutes the altar, but with a short, slight bow ; Don Vittorio Lante follows her and offers her another silver plate. The American girl approaches the Archduchess Maria Annunziata, and instead of the deep Court curtsy she makes her an elegant bow, the bow of the *Lancers*, throwing her a lively glance and gracious smile. The Archduchess moulds a pallid smile on her lips, and places another big gold coin in the plate, the same alms that she had given to her niece—one hundred francs in gold.

"*Merci, Altesse,*" exclaims Mabel Clarke, with a strong American accent.

She stops a moment, opens her white leather purse, spreads upon the plate, close to the gold coin of her Imperial and Royal Highness, the cheque for four hundred dollars—two thousand francs—which her mother, Annie Clarke, gave her. The Archduchess glances for a moment, a rush of blood flushes the pale, ivory-like face, then with an act of Christian humility she bows her head and prays.

Mabel Clarke's action has been seen by the first row of people near the altar, the action and the slip of white paper thrown into the plate has been seen and commented on. Like a long shiver it is communicated from row to row right to the back of the church. All murmur and whisper that there is a Clarke cheque in the plate, "Three hundred, five hundred lire, no, a thousand; scarcely a hundred and fifty, five hundred." And the crowd sways backwards and forwards, forgetful that already at the altar the first bell is ringing for the beginning of the sacrifice of the Host. Mabel Clarke in her white dress penetrates the congregation to the right of the High Altar, holding her plate a little raised to show it better. Her large grey eyes sparkle beneath the subtle arch of their chestnut eyebrows; the beautiful florid mouth over the white teeth smiles. She looks the person well in the face of whom she begs, as she smilingly repeats in French, "*pour notre chère église, Madame . . . pour notre chère église, Monsieur. . .*" Neither woman nor man resists the curiosity of detaining near them for a moment the daughter of the man six hundred times a millionaire, Mabel Clarke, the bride to be with twenty, thirty, fifty millions; and immediately after the curiosity an irresistible sympathy rises for the beautiful creature, beautiful with a new beauty, a new florescence, a new blood, of a new grace caused by new features, and of a charm caused by a new fascination.

All, men and women, from curiosity, sympathy, or vanity, as they see the Clarke cheque on which the coins are piling, give more than they wish to give; and she, smiling and bowing the white forehead, where the rebellious wave of hair is falling, thanks them with her marked American accent: "*Oh, merci, Madame, mille fois . . . merci, Monsieur, bien merci.*" She smiles and passes by, Don Vittorio Lante follows almost close beside her. He is a little pale and disturbed; perhaps all these

contacts annoy him ; but he does not say so. Then the altar bell invites the faithful to kneel ; a few who are attentive kneel. Mabel Clarke has gradually reached her American friends and they surround her with little subdued cries of joy and affection, while she smilingly offers the plate among them. The Wests, Milners, Rodds open their purses and smilingly draw out long white cheques and throw them in the plate, exclaiming, " Dear Mabel," " Darling," " Mabel dear."

Overwhelmed, contented, and happy she piles up the cheques in the middle, under the gold pieces. She smiles and smiles, showing her white teeth.

" Thank you, dearest Ellen ; thank you, dear, dear Norah."

The two couples have now reached the back of the church and meet, her Imperial and Royal Highness, the Archduchess Maria Vittoria, and the Comte de Roy, Mabel Clarke and Don Vittorio Lante della Scala. They form a motionless group, for now at the altar the acolyte's bell rings shrilly for the Elevation, and the congregation is on its knees with bowed heads. But a pure voice is raised up above at the organ. Lidia Smolenska sings an *Ave Maria* in her deep, touching voice, accompanied by the organ, which a German is playing, a tall German with a pointed, iron-grey beard and the most beautiful blue eyes—Otto von Rabbe, the friend of the mountains. The deep notes of the organ accompany the voice of the Polish lady that penetrates right to the heart, a voice full of ardour, languor, and melancholy. Some heads are gradually raised to hear better, faces are turned, and other heads draw together to speak a word or two in a very low whisper.

" . . . exiled ? "

" . . . nihilist ? "

" . . . schismatic ? "

" . . . on the stage ? "

The Elevation bell rings, and almost grudgingly heads are lowered again, as they listen to the perfect voice filling the church with its indescribable harmony, and to the organ touched with a master's touch till it reaches the most intimate fibres of the soul. Again there is a light whispering :

" . . . Von Raabe ? "

" . . . the great banker ? "

" . . . musician, nephew of the great master, Raabe ? "

" . . . a Lutheran ? "

" . . . a Lutheran playing in a Catholic church ? "

There is a loud ringing : the great mystery of Transubstantiation has been softly accomplished once more, though the congregation perceives nothing but the relief of rising and sitting down again, of being able to turn towards the organ, as they get up to sit down, and look at the white face of the Smolenska, where in its pallor is expressed a mortal melancholy, and who knows what secret voluptuousness. The two couples who have halted at the back of the church, with bowed heads, while our Lord descended in the consecrated Host, bow to each other as they return to their places.

" *Bonne quôte, Allessé !* " exclaimed Mabel Clarke, with a familiar smile.

The Archduchess Maria Vittoria does not thank her or exchange the good wishes. Bending her head with a slight bow she withdraws, followed by the Comte de Roy, and disappears on her side in the lateral nave. Mabel Clarke with her plate full of money, which she holds on high for fear of losing any of it, turns to Don Vittorio Lante, encouraging him to continue the walk, and both are lost on the other side. The priest at the altar communicates with the species ; but no one heeds him. For now André de Beauregard is singing a motet from Handel. His pure, crystalline voice resembles a clear spring of mountain water that rises singing and

trilling amidst the rocks of a very lofty ridge, and proceeds therefrom, ever singing and trilling, amidst meadows and grass and flowers. Just as the Smolenska's voice is ardent, so is André's limpid and silvery, and Otto von Raabe with his large, brown, knotty hands sounds the organ lightly, as if for a gay, childish game. In vain the second Gospel invites the faithful to rise again ; in vain the last formalities of the Divine Sacrifice unfold themselves. From head to head the murmuring begins afresh.

" . . . He could have millions."

" . . . If he liked to."

" . . . he doesn't like."

" . . . At New York."

" . . . *dommage, dommage.*"

" . . . *dommage.*"

The song dwindles and dies away. The Mass is not yet finished ; but all rise to leave, almost precipitately, while the priest is still kneeling at the foot of the altar for the last ejaculatory prayers. The church is at once deserted. Beneath the portico in the bright noontide the Archduchess stopped for a moment, her niece silently beside her. Both collectors have deposited their money in the sacristy. Already it is known that Mabel Clarke has gathered eight thousand francs, made up for the most part of American cheques. Mabel Clarke is among the respectful circle of ladies that has been formed before the Archduchess. The Princess turns to her with a brief smile, as if summoning her to her. The American girl advances, blushing with complacency.

" You have done much for the church, Miss Clarke," said the Archduchess slowly.

Then, after a moment, with perfect Christian humility, she added :

" Please thank Mrs. Clarke, too, for her generosity."

There is a large princely leave-taking round the

Archduchess Maria Annunziata. The ladies make deep curtseys, and for a moment the little square resembles a royal *salon*. Before even the two Archduchesses have got into their carriage, Mabel Clarke has taken leave of her American friends, and she sets off with Don Vittorio Lante by the longest way that climbs from the Dorf to the "Palace." At a certain point Mabel Clarke opens her white cambric parasol, and the two young heads disappear.

CHAPTER VII

THE clouds kept climbing continually behind the hill of the Maloja, suspended by an impetuous wind, which sometimes grew quiet for a while and then rose again violently and rudely in immense gusts. The clouds appeared in great masses white as snow and silver, with a light, delicate grey, a grey mixed with lily, and a leadlike grey, in every gradation from white to grey. They appeared in deep, vast masses, suspended by the wind and spread over the Engadine ; they covered the whole sky and almost seemed to touch the summits of the less lofty mountains. They were reflected in all their gigantesque forms and changing colours on the lakes of Sils, of Silvaplana, Campfer, and St. Moritz. They took away the blue from the sky and the brightness of the sun from the little towns, villages, and districts, giving them a pale grey tint. They passed, running and almost galloping, over the large hill that encloses St. Moritz at the foot of its lake, and passed over the valley of Samaden down towards Bevers, where the Engadine begins to descend.

Experienced eyes, which were raised to the sky in the morning, curiously and anxiously, perhaps hoped for, and believed in, one of those sudden and surprising passages of storm clouds which rise from the Val Bregaglia, the Italian clouds which traverse for an hour or two the immense plain of the upper Engadine, then descend behind the Valley of Samaden, towards the lower Engadine, and disappear, leaving the sky pure and

clear, as if their passage had cleansed it. Experienced eyes had hoped and believed this, relying chiefly on the great wind that pursued the clouds, that caused the surfaces of the lakes to be covered with a thousand ripples, that almost formed these little waves with white crests like a sea ; relying on this wind that caused the dust to whirl on the road from the Maloja to Samaden and all the trees with their lofty green plumes to rustle lamentingly ; trusting that this terrible wind, which filled with its crashing the whole Engadine, would at last chase away the Italian clouds, and precipitate them into the lower Engadine.

But for hours and hours the clouds continued to ascend from Bregaglia. For hours they substituted themselves for those which already had vanished afar, precipitated towards Scans and Tarasp ; for hours they came and joined themselves to the clouds not already dispersed, and added and heaped themselves upon them, more thickly, closely, and gigantically. Experienced eyes then understood that not even the imperious and boisterous wind which was rising incessantly from the Val Bregaglia and spreading them victoriously over all the Engadine, that was pressing and pursuing them with fury behind the horizon of the Val di Samaden ; they understood sorrowfully that not even that wind would conquer and overcome the clouds, to free the blue sky and bright sun. Moreover, suddenly the exhausted and vanquished wind fell. The conquering clouds ceased to gallop, and spread themselves, at first quietly and then without movement, like an immense deep pavement, now white, now pearl-grey, now leaden-grey, over all the Upper Engadine. Everything became the colour of the clouds : the air, the waters of the lakes, the colouring of the little rustic houses, lordly villas, towns and districts ; the larches became darker and more gloomy in their brown verdure.

It was two in the afternoon. But beneath the deep veil of clouds, beneath that great canopy which hid the lofty summits, which fringed the lower peaks and almost razed the more modest hills, in that atmosphere tinted with a monotonous colour, now white, now grey, but always pale and lifeless, time seemed not to exist, and it seemed as if it were a long, equal day, half dead, without dawn, afternoon, or evening. The furious wind that irritates and excites, exalts and exasperates, had vanished, and instead the calm sadness, broad and motionless, of an afternoon without end had spread itself everywhere.

Even sadder in its imposing lines was the great Valley of Samaden, shut out and divided from that of St. Moritz by the hill of Charnadüras, peculiarly cut in two, covered to the right by a pretty little wood of shady trees, aromatic plants, and Alpine flowers, so austere and dominated here by the Corvatsch and Rosatch, which are girded and hemmed in by the Muottas Muraigl, while in the middle, where it is broadest, the valley opens, showing in the background, over the Roseg glacier, the very lofty, white, virginal beauty of the tremendous Bernina. This great valley lacks the grace and fascination of the delightful lakes of Sils, Silvaplana, and St. Moritz, while through its immense green meadows flow, foaming white like milk, the Flatzbach, which comes from the Bernina singing its subdued song, and the little brook Schlattenbeich. But these foaming, fleeting waters do not succeed in enlivening and vivifying the countryside—the great valley where little Cresta and tiny Celerina seem lost, and even Samaden seems lost in the remote corner of the plain; the great valley that seems inanimate, although the railway crosses it, and equipages, carriages, and pedestrians of all kinds traverse it, going and coming from St. Moritz and Pontresina. The isolated villas gleam white against

the green of the meadows ; the hotels of Cresta and Celerina show their verandahs shaded by awnings and straw or canvas protections for those who like the open air but fear wind and sun. The Cresta Palace raises its four storeys with its hundred rooms, carved balconies, and Swiss banner. Carriages come and go rapidly and slowly from every part, but the Valley of Samaden preserves its solitary austerity, and this close veil of clouds which extends from St. Moritz to the extreme horizon seems as if made to cover it completely, and it seems as if that colourless, pale air belonged to the Valley of Samaden, and that this dead afternoon was its afternoon, which better suited its vastness, solitude, and immense melancholy.

The villa of Karl Ehbehard rises isolated in a broad meadow, that gradually slopes from a façade with two storeys to the opposite façade with three. It is situated between Cresta and Celerina ; the principal façade, that with two storeys, is almost on the side of the high road which goes from Cresta to Celerina. Round the villa, which is very new in the bright colouring of its stones, in the light wood and carving of its verandahs, runs a strip of land which forms a little garden enclosed by a wooden fence, and in front, at the edge of the road, by a trellis. This tiny garden which surrounds and embraces the Villa Ehbehard is planted with shrubs and bright Swiss flowers, red, yellow, purple, and white ; but still all these little plants and flowers have not had much time in which to grow. The wooden windows and the central verandah, with their carved balustrades and little roofs, are also adorned with vases of flowers, mountain carnations, Alpine geraniums, and winter roses. On the grey, almost white stones and bright wood these flowers, miraculously cultivated at such an altitude, smile brightly. At the rear façade of Villa Ehbehard, which is the taller, looking towards the

meadows that billow peculiarly in little mounds and ditches, on the first floor there is a large covered, yet open terrace, supported by pillars—an Italian terrace. In the centre is a large table covered with books and newspapers ; there are a few chairs and arm-chairs, and on the stone parapet are placed vases with plants. And if from the windows and verandah of the chief façade of Villa Ehbehard there is a continuous spectacle of people passing in carriages, on bicycles and on foot, and the train is to be seen passing from Albula to disappear in the tunnel beneath the hill of Charnadûras, and opposite there is the Cresta Palace with all its movement of a caravanserai, and further on the little Hôtel Frizzoni with its confectionery shop and tea garden, full of tables at which to take tea at five, and full of people, from the terrace in the rear of Villa Ehbehard the whole scene changes completely. Here in front a broad landscape spreads in every direction. To the right, below, is the gloomy gorge of the Inn, whence it issues like a ribbon of shining metal amidst the tumultuous billows of the meadows, and near the river is the brown, almost black wood that jealously hides the sad, little, deserted lake of Statz ; then there is the great canopy of larches that follows, from the estuary of the Meierei, the road that leads to Pontresina. To the left in the lifeless air is the little church and campanile of San Gian di Celerina, where nowadays only the office for the dead is said, and for the departed who have been buried and have slept for so many years in the little cemetery ; the broad green stretch towards Samaden, and on high the white peaks of Languard and Albris, and very far off the Roseg glacier, and the lady of the mountains, of snow and ice—the white and fearsome Bernina. It is a landscape of silence and peace, a landscape of thought and dream.

On that day, as usual at that hour, Doctor Karl Ehbehard was seated alone in an arm-chair, reading

and yet not reading, as he contemplated the landscape thoughtfully. Of tall stature, thin and muscular, Karl Fritz Ehbehard presented an aspect of strength, and his face one of energy. On the large white forehead, his black hair, which was quite streaked with white at the temples, formed a thick, untidy tuft, mixed with white hairs, a rebellious tuft that was displaced by every movement of the head. Above the mouth a large thick moustache sprinkled with white hid the expression of the lips and the smile. The profile was fine and strong, the complexion a rather pale tan. But the piercing, very piercing, grey eyes were peculiar and impregnated with a sadness that could also be pride and harshness ; peculiar eyes that pierced the face of whomsoever was present, and spoke with such a flow of penetration that the timid were frightened and the proud offended. His neck in the high white collar was rather thin, and so were his hands. He is in the prime of life, since he has not yet reached fifty, every act and gesture of his and every change of expression always indicating a complete fusion of physical force and moral energy. His eyes hurt with their cutting glance ; but still in their depths escape the sadness which humanly tempers everything and humanly assuages.

A servant entered with a visiting-card on a tray. With a fastidious air Karl Ehbehard interrupted his reading and threw a glance at the name on the card. After a moment of hesitation he said to the man in German :

" Here."

Ehbehard put down his books and got up, advancing towards the door of the terrace which gave on to the apartment. A lady appeared and stopped at the threshold as if doubtful of coming out. Just bowing slightly Doctor Karl Ehbehard said to her, pointing to a chair :

" It is better here, Your Highness."

Enveloped in a large coat of marten fur, over which

she had placed a fur tippet, with a veil of the finest white lace, the Grand Duchess of Gotha advanced to the chair, into which she let herself fall, as if tired by the stairs she had been forced to climb, and after taking breath for a while, she raised her white veil and carried her fur muff to her mouth, so as not to breathe suddenly and directly the fresh air. And Karl Ehbehard saw again the woman's face with its Teutonic ugliness, spreading features, forehead too high, mouth too broad, eyes with lashes too bright, eyebrows too light, temples hollowed, and in addition the traces of disease—a complexion rendered yellow everywhere, and pinkish on the cheek-bones, the ears very white, the lips bloodless, and the neck very thin. There was an expression of fear, oppression, and loss in the almost white eyes. The yellowish hair was precociously whitened, and drawn back without grace and tightened into a bunch. All that was feminine was a great richness of apparel, of lace, and furs over a long, thin, bony body. The Grand Duchess, as she breathed, opened her lips with a certain effort, showing her large, yellowish teeth. But in spite of all this she preserved a sovereign air.

"Still the same, Herr Doctor," she said, in a rather rough voice.

"Your Highness has slept?" asked the great doctor, indifferently.

"Slept, yes; five or six hours."

"That is sufficient. Did you cough on waking?"

"As every day."

"Not more?"

"No."

"Fever?"

"A degree or two yesterday evening; four or five degrees."

"Perspiration?"

"A little—as usual."

"Then, Your Highness, there is nothing fresh."

"Nothing fresh indeed!" she exclaimed, raising her voice, like a little cry, and coughing immediately afterwards.

Very coldly and quietly, the great phthisis doctor waited for the Grand Duchess to begin all the daily grievances, which she came every day to explain to him, at least to get consolation.

"I get no better, Herr Doctor."

"But Your Highness gets no worse."

"How long can all this last?"

"A long time, a long time yet."

She looked at him, with her light eyes more troubled than ever: she looked at him, half consoled and uncertain.

"Do you believe that this can last, *mein Herr*?"

"I believe so," he said, still coldly but firmly.

"Shall I not die within a month or a year, *mein Herr*? Tell me."

Coldly, icily, he looked at her with his terribly penetrating eyes, which, however, were sad and even pitiful. Without hesitation he answered her.

"Neither within a month nor a year."

She bowed her head and sighed deeply: and an expression of comfort spread itself on the face worn with disease, which had neither beauty nor grace, but yet inspired interest and pity.

"May I not leave for Gotha?" she murmured anxiously.

"Certainly not, Your Highness."

"The Grand Duke complains of my long absence."

"Does that matter?"

"My children are alone; why may I not see them?"

"Your presence, Your Highness, would do them more harm than good."

"I am bored here."

" But you live, Your Highness."

" Yes, I live, it is true ; but I don't care either for the country or the people," she said, with an accent of disgust.

" And why ? "

" Because I am ill ; because I can no longer do what the others do. I only like you here, Herr Doctor."

And she looked at him as at a sacred image, with reverence and almost with fear.

" But why ? " he asked, without showing surprise.

" Because you, *mein Herr*, know the secret of my life and death. Won't you come to Gotha ? "

" No, Your Highness."

" Not even for me ? "

" Not even for you, Your Highness."

" Are you so fond of this country ? Why do you like it so much ? " she asked weakly, still a little discouraged.

" Because it has a secret of life and not of death, Your Highness," added Doctor Karl Ehbehard mysteriously, with a slight bow.

She understood and rose. She came towards him, took his two hands in hers, and pressing them said :

" Do you really believe that I ought to remain in this country ? "

" I believe so, Your Highness."

" When shall I be able to go away ? "

" I don't know. Certainly not now. Perhaps after a long time."

She bowed her head and added nothing further.

" Thanks, *mein Herr*, good-bye till to-morrow."

" Till to-morrow, Your Highness."

Without undue hurry, correctly but silently, he led her within the apartment and let the servant accompany her below to the carriage, to which were attached two spirited, dapple-grey horses. The Grand Duchess of

Gotha wrapped her marten mantle better around her, pressed to her neck the fur tippet, closed her mouth firmly behind the close veil, drew over her knees the soft carriage rug, and alone and silently, looking at no one, wrapped in herself, but preserving a regal air, she vanished to the rapid trotting of her horses towards St. Moritz and Campfer, where she dwelt in the solitary Villa Sorretta.

Afterwards the servant ushered in to the doctor on the terrace two other patients, the brothers Freytag, the great bankers of Vienna, who only came once or twice a week, the sons and nephews of the great Freytags, bankers of Frankfort, Hamburg, and London, bankers and shippers as well.

Since the winter, which they had passed at the Hôtel Kulm at the Dorf, save for a break of two months, April and May, when the one had returned to Vienna and the other to Frankfort, they had repaired to Doctor Karl Ehbehard twice a week. Of the two Freytag brothers one only seemed to be ill, because in spite of his thirty-five years his tall figure was bent, his slender shoulders beneath his navy-blue coat formed a curve, his breast beneath the white woollen waistcoat with the gold buttons seemed as narrow as that of a bird. Already his black hair was scanty and always seemed to be moist; beneath the eyebrows the eyes were hollow. But underlying all this was a fineness of feature, a sweetness of expression, and a lordliness of manner that made Max Freytag even more interesting. The other brother, younger by four or five years, seemed most healthy. Of middle stature, fat, with a rather thick throat and neck, very fair with heavy moustaches and bright hair, Ludwig Freytag had a good-natured, healthy, middle-class appearance.

Max first began to relate in German all that had happened to him during the three days that he had not been

to Villa Ehbehard. He spoke slowly with a rather suave voice, saying that every degree of fever had vanished, that the cough was less, but that he was not sleeping and eating, that he was not digesting and could not contrive to conquer the insomnia. The doctor listened, with his hands on the arms of his chair, motionless and indifferent.

"Is Frau Freytag still with you?" he suddenly asked.

"She is still with me."

"It is a grave imprudence and great sacrifice."

"I know it is," murmured Max Freytag; "but I can't prevent her. I have tried, and I cannot."

"She loves you, and you love her?" asked the doctor harshly.

"Yes," murmured the other, in an even lower voice.

"Why did you marry her when you were ill?"

"I did not wish to marry her because I knew I was ill. She wished to marry me because I was ill."

"Frau Freytag is an angel," said the doctor icily.

"An angel," agreed the other, and became silent.

After a moment's silence Max Freytag resumed:

"Do you believe, doctor, that her presence and propinquity does me harm physically?"

And all the egoism of an invalid, of a consumptive, was in the anxiety of this question.

"No," replied the doctor precisely, "it does you no harm."

"Without her I could not live," groaned the consumptive.

"But she could die," declared Karl Ehbehard, fixing Max Freytag with his sharp eyes, and piercing his soul.

"Charlotte is so young, so strong, so beautiful," stammered Max Freytag.

The doctor said nothing more. Then Ludwig Freytag opened his thick, florid lips and slowly told the doctor the progress of his malady. It was graver than that of his brother, and while nothing revealed it externally, while

nothing but the expert eye of Karl Ehbehard could have discovered its creeping, it was making a constant, destructive, almost invincible progress. While he spoke of the long fits of coughing that suffocated him, morning, evening, and night, of his agitated slumbers, of his profuse nocturnal sweating, of the fever that assailed him at every dawn ; fat, gross, rosy, with a bull neck, and his round, limpidly-blue eyes, almost obese on his short legs, Ludwig Freytag seemed the picture of health. Seized by the fixed idea of the disease that was consuming them, Max Freytag, who seemed the more ill, and Ludwig Freytag, actually the more ill although he did not recognise it, began to lament, now the one, then the other, of the horrible existence they were living—Max for ten years, Ludwig for five, the one thirty-five, the other thirty—an existence consisting only of medical cures, of a rigorous régime, of obligatory sojournings and obligatory journeys. Ah, how above everything the two brothers complained of having to live far away from Vienna, from Frankfort, from Hamburg, from London ; far from their banking-houses, from the colossal port whence their ships departed, far from their powerful businesses and their vast interests, and so losing their great chances of gaining millions with their stagnating fortune.

"To be rich does not matter, it is to live that matters," interrupted Doctor Ehbehard, with a cutting glance.

"Yes, that was too true," groaned the two brothers, Max with his soft, sweet voice and perfect distinction, Ludwig fretting, fuming, always seeming to suffocate. After all living mattered, but *that* life apart from every festivity, from every distraction, like two paupers separated from the world and its pleasures, condemned to measure even what they ate, to analyse what they drank, destined to live in the great centres of joy and luxury, like two wandering shadows, avoiding rooms too

warm, verandahs too cold, and smoking-rooms—what a life of renunciation !

“ One must make renunciations to live,” declared Doctor Karl, slightly pale, with lowered eyes.

“ Yes, renunciations,” they said, Max Freytag in an almost weeping voice, and Ludwig with one of grotesque anger ; but what a destiny for both to be struck down by this cruel disease, which no one in their family had ever had—both sons of the head of the House of Freytag, the only sons of the House of Freytag—as if stricken to death by a curse, although they could live perhaps and drag out their life, yet they must implacably die of it.

Suddenly both became silent, in consternation, Max pale and as if convulsed, Ludwig heated and asthmatical. They became silent, gazing with eyes full of tears at Doctor Ehbehard, with an expression of great sorrow and supplication. He from his seat looked at the two ailing brothers, vowed to infirmity and death ; he looked at them and his eyes lost all indifference and harshness. Perhaps beneath his thick, sprinkled moustache his lips trembled ; for he was slow to answer them. Before and around the two men the great Alpine landscape, even more lifeless, beneath the weight of its motionless clouds, spread itself. And not a noise nor a breath of wind came to give them the living sense of life.

Slowly, meaning every word, with a sagacity which did not only come from science, Doctor Ehbehard began to discuss, one by one, all the complaints of the brothers, and if there was no promise in his just words, if there was no false hope in his phrases, at any rate they inspired patience, and calm hope ; they restored equilibrium, tranquillity, and peace to those agitated spirits. Like two children, fixing and holding his eyes with their imploring eyes, noting every word and impressing them on their memory, making no gesture so as to lose nothing of what he was saying, so as not to lose a fleeting

expression, like children who wished for succour, protection, and strength, Max and Ludwig Freytag regained courage and moral vigour in the presence of Karl Ehbehard. He did not speak entirely to Max, who was the less ill of the two and who might be cured, but he told them both that their life was still tenacious, and that their youth could not be conquered either easily or soon. He did not promise them perfect health, but he promised them the superior energy that supports disease and ends by obeying it. Karl Ehbehard did not pity their cruel destiny, which in them was destroying their fortune and their house, but he invited them to pity so many other invalids, thousands and hundreds of thousands who were languishing and perishing for want of care and medicine, sick and languishing of gloomy misery, who had no more means of supporting their families, and dying, would leave them in extreme poverty. And all the human sorrow of disease that finds no obstacles or contrasts, of the disease that ruins, that tortures, that whips, that slays, since its companion is misery, all the human sorrow of hundreds of thousands of sufferers who were perishing without succour, medicine and food, in narrow death-dealing houses, on hard beds of cold and want—all this inconsolable, disconsolate human suffering was reviewed in the calm, firm words of Karl Ehbehard, shone from his glance, and flowed from his voice. The two brothers felt calmed and soothed, as if their little insignificant sorrow were dissolved in their mind.

When they had left, Doctor Ehbehard remained for some time quite alone on his terrace, where he was wont to pass the afternoon, and where, to the surprise of all his new clients, he preferred to receive the visits of the sick instead of in his large consulting-room, furnished like the other rooms, and which looked out on the principal façade at the back. Again his reading absorbed him, but it was more a concentration of spirit, a recollection of his

thoughts, since he seldom turned over the pages. Twice while he was thus taken and conquered by his interior life, his faithful servant appeared at the doorway to tell his master something, but knowing him quite well and seeing him thus immersed in silence, and motionless, he had not dared to call him. At last, at the third time, he ventured to disturb a chair to attract Doctor Karl's attention, who, raising his head, as if aroused from a lethargy, looked at him as in a dream. He read the visiting card that the servant offered him twice.

"*La Vicomtesse de Bagdad*," he read in French, and then added to the servant in German :

" New ? "

" New."

She whom Doctor Karl Fritz Ehbehard covered with a most rapid scrutinising glance, hardly had she appeared on the terrace hesitating to advance, was a woman of forty-five, very dark and pale, with a thick mass of black hair without a thread of white, with a face of perfect features without a wrinkle, of a complete beauty, already mature, and which, perhaps, would still last for years before declining. Cunningly this mature beauty was supported by dominant, but not offensive, traces of cosmetics and bistre—a light shade of pink on the cheeks a little too pale, a slight trace of rouge on the well-designed lips. There was an even more cunning taste in the dressing of the hair, in her clothes and hat, an intense but discreet luxury, an exquisite but yet prudent elegance. But over all this beauty, which must have been invincible twenty years ago, and dazzling ten years ago, there was a proud and scornful expression. At some moments this mature beauty became rather austere or even gloomy, in the blackness of the eyes, in the soft and knotted eyebrows, in the closed mouth, as if hermetically sealed. At a nod from the doctor, who, without showing interest, continued to scrutinise her, she sat down.

"Madame has come to consult a doctor?" he asked in French, with a German accent, but as if he attached no importance to the reply.

"Yes, Doctor. But do we have to discuss here?" she observed, with a slight gesture of wonder and perhaps of impatience.

"Here, Madame," he replied tranquilly.

"Can we not retire into a room? Will it not be better?"

"No," he declared, "it is better to remain in the open air in the Engadine."

"For sick people?"

"For sick and healthy," he added, "nothing is of greater value than air in this country."

And he threw a glance around at the landscape. The lady bowed, perhaps not convinced but mollified.

"Are you ill, Madame?"

"No, Herr Doctor," she replied.

And a sudden pallor caused her dark face to become livid.

"Someone who is most dear to me," she added with lowered eyes, "my son—my only son—I fear consumption."

Again a rush of pallor passed over her features.

"Why did you not bring him with you, Madame?"

She raised her magnificent black eyes, where an immense pride was apparent, and looked at the doctor.

"Through fear, through fear," she stammered.

"Fear, Madame?"

"For fear that you might have something serious to tell my son. He is twenty-five, Doctor."

"I should have said nothing before him," said the great consumption doctor slowly. "I should have told you afterwards."

"Ah, he would have understood everything!" exclaimed the woman sorrowfully.

"Is he so ill, then?"

" Very, very ill, Herr Doctor."

" For how long ? "

" For a year."

" And how old is he ? "

" Twenty-five, Herr Doctor ; I was twenty when I had him," she declared, without circumlocution.

" Have you ever suffered from what he is suffering, Madame ? " asked the doctor coldly.

" No ; never, never," she replied at once.

" And the father ? " asked the doctor.

" The father of my son was not my husband. I have never been married."

She said this without timidity and without boldness, with a calm certainty, as if Doctor Ehbehard ought to know or guess at once who she was.

" And was he ill, Madame ? Try to remember."

" Not ill, but very delicate."

" This illness, then, comes from the father," concluded the doctor.

" But you will cure him, won't you, Herr Doctor ? " she exclaimed anxiously. " I am come first to tell you all. Doctor, I have only this son. You must cure him. You must tell me everything, and I will do everything you tell me. I am very rich, Herr Doctor. My friends have been very generous to me. I am the *Vicomtesse de Bagdad* ; have you never heard my name ? A false name, Herr Doctor. I am not called so. My real name doesn't matter, nor would my money matter if it were not of use to cure my son Robert."

Now she seemed another woman. The disdain and pride which rendered her beauty austere, and at times gloomy, had disappeared. Anguish was transforming the womanly face that had lived so many years solely for pleasure, the senses, and voluptuousness. Each feature revealed simple, bare, maternal suffering—the suffering of every mother.

" Doctor, they are sending us away from the hotel where we are ! In fact, all the women tremble for their husbands and sons on my account. They do not know that I see them not, and know them not. I do not wish to see or know their men. But in a way it is right. Think, Doctor—the *Vicomtesse de Bagdad* ! "

Two long tears of anger, shame, and sorrow descended the pallid cheeks and fell on her bosom. She wiped her face at once, feverishly.

" Do not disturb yourself," he said in a firm tone, in that tone which was wont to raise the mind of whomsoever listened to him. " If they send you away from the hotel, go into a villa ; you will find one."

" Yes, I will find one," she exclaimed, consoled at once. " And you will come there, Doctor ? You will come ? You are a virtuous and great man ; if you come to the villa you will have no scandal : you will only find Robert and me, ourselves alone, the poor mamma with her poor son. You will come, won't you ? "

" As soon as you have found the villa I will come."

" And you will cure Robert, Doctor ? "

" I do not know : I don't know at all."

" But you will try, won't you ? You will try ? " seizing his hands, with a mother's cry.

" I promise to try my best," he replied.

A short sigh broke the voice of the woman who had lived only for pleasure and vice, and who now was a mother grieved to the heart. She choked in her cambric handkerchief, fragrant with a delicate perfume. She bowed her head a minute to compose herself before leaving, and then left followed by the silken rustling of her train.

When Karl Ehbehard was again alone on the terrace, that projected into the solitary and imposing landscape in the declining day, he did not resume his reading, nor did he contemplate thoughtfully the austere lines of the

mountains and the great curtain of trees which hid the road, and the waters running and leaping amidst the thick grass of the meadows. As if tired, he let his head fall on his breast, and all that he had seen and heard on that day was weighing on his mind.

All the morning he had visited in his carriage sick people who could not leave their houses, from those isolated in far-off villas to those isolated in the *dépendances* of hotels, since in the summer-time, especially, no hotel-keeper wished to have consumptives in his own hotel, so as not to put to flight other travellers who came to the Engadine, travellers who came there through love of gaiety, of pleasure, of luxury, who came to the high mountains through a refinement of the senses, wishing to unite the spectacle of the beauty of things to an ardent, febrile, worldly life.

All the morning, to the trotting of his horses, he had gone to the Dorf, to the Bad, even to Campfer, awaited everywhere with anxiety. He had touched fleshless hands still feverish from the night ; he had stooped to gather, with acute ear, at the naked breast of the sick, the hoarse, interior breathing ; he had heard the dry attacks of coughing following each other precipitously, leaving the sick without breath ; and he had listened to the long, lamenting conversation of those who felt that they were not growing better, who felt that they were growing worse and declining to a fatal solution. Indeed, the whole morning, with persuasive glance, with cold and calm words, with whatever there was in him of moral force and energy, he had striven to console all those who were tormented by the fear of death ; he had striven to comfort them without lying to them, without promising them anything, lest on the morrow they should be bitterly deluded. He had striven to excite patience in them and tranquil courage, telling them that when one wishes to grow better and wishes it intensely, one does grow better,

and that a secret of escaping death is to wish not to die with all the mysterious vigour of will-power. And once again, morning and afternoon, before the hundred sadnesses more incurable than phthisis itself, before the hundred woes of poor beings devoured by disease, he had seen the singular, amazing miracle performed ; he had seen the sick grow calm and serene, resume vigour, and smile, yes, smile, with vague, indefinite, infinite hope. Through his presence and will-power for good, through his firm serenity, he had seen the miracle renewed, however brief and fleeting. The sick felt themselves better without taking drugs, and felt themselves first tranquillised and then excited to joy, yes, almost to joy ! He knew these miracles of these strange diseases ; pious miracles that make of the consumptive a being apart, capable of smiling, of hoping, even to the last breath of his destroyed lungs. He knew these miracles because with his will-power for good and the fascination of his eyes and words, he understood how to dominate, conquer, and exalt the changeful, light minds of the poor sufferers from phthisis. But the effort put forth by him on that morning and afternoon, more than any other day, had exhausted him. An immense weariness oppressed his physiognomy and his limbs in the large arm-chair of black leather, upon the arms of which his rather thin hands were abandoning themselves, as if they, too, had been struck by a profound weariness. When after a short time he raised his head, Else von Landau was before him.

She had not been announced. Like the Grand Duchess of Gotha, she came every day, when she felt bad, to the Villa Ehbehart ; sometimes, when she felt better, she came there two or three times a week, like the brothers Freytag. She knew where to find the doctor and how to enter discreetly, so as not to disturb him if he were reading, studying, or if he were thinking and resting. She had entered cautiously without warning him of her presence,

and had sat down at some distance from him, opening her mantle of otter-skin with sweet, silvery revers of chinchilla, beneath which she was dressed in brown cloth. She had untied the large veil which surrounded face and neck, and all the hat and head. Her delicate, white face, with the clearest complexion, appeared even whiter beneath the shining, soft chestnut hair. On the white temples, beneath the grey eyes, a network of little blue veins was delineated. With hands that clasped a large bunch of Alpine flowers abandoned on her lap, now and then biting her lips to make them redder, and coughing very slightly so as not to be heard, she waited patiently till Karl Ehbehard was aware of her. Seeing her the doctor started ; but he restrained a movement of impatient weariness.

" How are you, then, Fraülein Landau ? " he asked her monotonously in German, speaking as if in a dream.

" I am rather bad, Doctor," she replied, with a fleeting smile on her lips.

Her voice was soft but hoarse ; the veil, however, increased its penetrating softness.

" Why ? Tell me everything."

She settled herself better in her chair, crossed her exquisitely booted little feet, which peeped out from the skirt, put down her chinchilla muff, smelt her Alpine flowers, and said :

" The pain up here has tormented me all the evening and night. This morning, too, when coughing there were some streaks of blood."

" Have you kept them, Fraülein Landau ? " he asked, perfectly returned to himself, and again become the doctor.

" No," she replied, with a shrug of the shoulders. " I thought it was useless."

" It was not useless."

" Another time I will not fail," she murmured, in a

slightly ironical tone ; " I seem to have had fever again for two or three days."

" Did you use the thermometer ? "

" No," she replied, " I did not use it. I have thrown away my thermometer ; it tortured me too much. It is an odious instrument. When I have fever I recognise it from the palms of my hands."

" Still, it should have been necessary to know the degree."

" What does it matter, Doctor ? " she said, a little more lively. " To sadden my mother ? She has too much sorrow, the poor dear ! "

" But did you follow out my instructions ? " the doctor asked her patiently.

" I take all your medicines, Doctor, because my mother makes me take them : I eat what you tell me because she makes me eat it," she declared, again smiling a little sarcastically.

" What about the rest ? "

" The rest ? "

" Do you go to bed early ? "

" No, Doctor, I go to bed very late every night."

" And what do you do ? "

" I dance nearly every evening, or chat with my friends, or play bridge."

" Do you dance in a *décolleté* dress ? "

" Certainly ; every evening I am in a *décolleté* dress, even if there is no dancing."

" And you have supper sometimes ? Do you drink champagne ? "

" Yes, Doctor ; I adore champagne."

" And what do you do in the morning and afternoon ? "

" I go out on foot or in a carriage. We make excursions. I walk a great deal when I can. I went on foot to the Roseg glacier."

" Always in company ? "

" Always : I have various flirts, Doctor. One of them especially is more than a flirt. He loves me. I am fond of him and torment him with jealousy of my other flirts."

The conversation developed, calmly and coldly on the Doctor's side, brightly and mockingly, with a touch of impertinent bitterness, on Else's side. He said to her :

" Why are you doing all this ? To kill yourself ? "

" To die the sooner," she declared suddenly, becoming serious.

" Don't you care to live ? "

" I don't care about living, sick, half alive, dying," she declared, still very serious.

" You are making your poor mother despair."

" That is true ; but it is better for her to get used to despair for the time when she will lose me."

" She will die of grief."

" After me : I shall not see it, it will be all over," concluded Else von Landau gloomily. Then suddenly she began to laugh.

" Dear Doctor, you have not told me, but I know that I am doomed. Certainly I could drag on my life for years by busying myself only with my drugs, my regime, the heat of my room ; by watching myself from morn till night, not speaking for fear of tiring my lungs, like Maria Goertz, who has lived two years here with a closed mouth ; by fleeing from balls, festivities, theatres, engagements, only wearing the thickest furs, unable to go in *décolleté* or transparent dresses, unable to have either flirt or lover, forced to live summer and winter at St. Moritz Dorf or Davos, or failing that in a sanatorium. Oh, no, Doctor ! I don't wish to live thus. That is no life ; I prefer to end it—to end it at once."

Her large, grey, velvety eyes, with almost blue pupils, flashed with a desire of life and death, her complexion

was flushed, and the little blue veins of the temples were almost swollen. A funereal beauty was in her countenance.

"Doctor, Doctor," she resumed, in a higher but rougher voice, "I don't want to exile myself, to cloister myself; I don't want to renounce anything life should give me or place within my reach. I don't want to renounce being beautiful, being loved, smiling, and becoming exhilarated with air, and sun, and love. I wish to resign nothing and prefer to live less, live a very short time, sooner than renounce things. I am thirty and a widow. I have no sons and am rich. After my death there is nothing but silence, Doctor. I don't want to renounce things."

He looked at her, recognising in her the subtle delirium of consumptives. He looked at her, so beautiful, so charming and fragile, made to live, yet so desirous of life and death, and at last his heart, after the long day of fatigue and suffering for others, so closed and granite-like, opened and welled with an immense pity for her who was invoking death, who was ready to meet it, and who was embracing it, because she would renounce nothing.

Else von Landau resumed deliriously :

"Doctor, would you renounce them? Would you renounce every good and joy and triumph, every excitement. Would you renounce them?"

He looked at her, with a glance laden with mystery and strength, and answered her in a clear voice :

"I did so : I made the renunciation."

Else was profoundly surprised and trembled all over, questioning him with her beautiful, supplicating eyes.

"Do you know how old I was when I was seized by the chest affection you have?" he asked her, in a cutting voice.

"You? You?"

"At twenty-three I was seized and overthrown by your malady," he continued. "I am from Basle, an old, grey, cold place ; but I went to study medicine in Germany, at Heidelberg, and lived there four years in great ardour for study and science, in a dream that absorbed and devoured me. My masters conceived for me the highest hopes. I myself was impetuous, but restrained myself with waiting for some profound scientific mystery that might be revealed to my desire and my tireless discipline of work. One winter evening I was caught on the road by a heavy shower. Next day I had inflammation of the lungs. I spat blood for several days and was dying. With difficulty I was rescued from death, and six months afterwards, at twenty-three, Fräulein von Landau, I had tuberculosis of both lungs. Those who were tending me tried to deceive me ; but I was a doctor and knew I must die. Someone told me to come here for six months or a year. Full of fever, still spitting blood, no longer sleeping or taking nourishment, and despairing of everything, I came here. I am forty-eight ; for twenty-five years I have been here and I have never left."

"Never at all ? Never at all ? " she cried, surprised, moved to the depths of her soul.

"Never. Twenty-five years ago the Engadine was an almost deserted region, wild and very sad in some places ; fearful and tragic in others. Some modest little inn in the height of summer gave hospitality to a few simple lovers of the mountains, to some invalid or convalescent. There were no conveniences or pleasures or luxury or elegance. Vast solitary horizons, immense meadows whose flowers very few human feet disturbed ; mountains unharmed from people's contact, a country with an austere, solitary, and powerful beauty. I lived, so poor was I, in a little rustic cottage belonging to some Engadine peasants. I fed on milk, vegetables, and

herbs. I had no one with whom to exchange a word, since even then the healthy and robust fled from those stricken with my terrible disease. I wandered along difficult and rugged paths that no one had tracked ; I drank at the icy waters of the springs beneath the glaciers ; I gathered the mountain flowers which filled with perfume my little room, and I read a little. In winter my confinement became fearful amidst the snow and ice, shut up at first in my room ; then mad with weariness, boredom, and gloom I sallied forth, in the cruel cold, every day on the snow and ice. After a year my malady was conquered. The pure, cold air, the pure water, a life of simplicity and purity, an isolation that pacifies and soothes, an interior life profound and free, the treasures that the high mountains jealously preserve, that are spread out only to humble and devout seekers after health, silence and peace—those treasures were granted me and I was saved. I never left the Engadine again : I made the renunciation."

She listened to him, silent and moved, her eyes clouded with tears.

" I renounced every joy and delight, every triumph. I might have discovered an immense secret of science to reveal it to a stupid world. I might have signed with my name a truth still unknown and benefited with noble gifts the human race ; I might have been illustrious and celebrated—but I renounced everything. I might have been loved, I might have loved and founded a family, had sons, and surrounded myself with beings who might have been blood of my blood—I renounced all that. I might have lived in a metropolis, run through the world, visited unknown countries, known far-off peoples. I renounced them ; everything I renounced. What am I, forsooth ? A doctor, a wretched doctor, a doctor of rich consumptives in a summer and winter station. I am paid handsomely, but I am nothing but a poor

doctor who strives to prolong a life here and there as well as he can—nothing more. For twenty-five years I have not moved from here : I am alone, no one loves me, I love no one ; I have neither glory nor love, no sons, no pleasures."

" And why all this, why ? " cried Else von Landau, anxious and agitated.

" Because one must live as long as possible : because one must die as late as possible ; because one must, you understand, combat death," he said solemnly.

" Did you not suffer from the renunciation ? Did you not suffer from what you missed ? Do you not suffer from what you are missing ? " she asked, still discouraged, but already conquered.

" I suffered *then*," replied Karl Ehbehard. " I suffered greatly. These woods and rocks, once so solitary, have seen my tears. Afterwards I suffered no more. And now some sweetness comes into my life in this exercise of my art : if I manage to snatch some infirm creature from death—a rare sweetness. But nothing more. So even renunciation offers at last its compensations. Renounce, dear lady,"—and his voice grew a little tender—" these joys which are precipitating you towards death. Seek other things up here for a year or two amidst natural and pure beauties. Live here in peaceful contemplation of sky and clouds and air, of proud mountains and terrible glaciers ; of slender streams, deep woods, and fragrant flowers. Live here with yourself, creating a more intense interior life. Do you not see ? This land has been invaded by a horde of pleasure-seekers and vicious people, whereby the sick and ailing and lovers of the mountains are being overturned and disappear. The land has been far too much sown with villas, immense hotels and little hotels, and has been defiled by railways, electric trams, and funiculars ; in every way the attempt has been made to

destroy her beauty and secret of life. But they will never destroy them! Her beauty and purity are eternal and immortal. Ah, renounce the world, dear lady; later let the pleasure-seekers depart, and remain alone in the presence of all that is lofty, sincere, and vivifying. Seek no more the crowd that takes you and consumes your strength; mix no more with them, fly from their ardent, sterile pleasures, refuse their vain and dangerous gifts—renounce them, renounce them! If you want to live and be cured, renounce them. Here by yourself in solitude and silence, in contact with lofty things, now gentle, now terrible, the great treasure of health that the mountains guard and concede only to fervent worshippers will be granted to you. Make the renunciation or die. I am the apostle of life."

"I will obey you," she said, subdued.

He rose; and with a simple, friendly action took her hand.

"Your hard sacrifice will later have its reward," murmured Karl Ehbehard, in a subdued voice.

She questioned him with her beautiful, velvety eyes.

"If he who loves you and whom you love knows how to wait, he will have you," added Karl Ehbehard.

An intense smile of happiness appeared on Elze von Landau's lips.

"So much was not granted to me," he ended by saying, sadly.

CHAPTER VIII

THOUGHTFULLY and dreamily Lucio Sabini was dallying, stretched in his arm-chair beside his writing-table; a newspaper had fallen from his hand and lay opened on the carpet, his cigarette had gone out and he had not lit another. In the little, sympathetic Hôtel Caspar Badruth, with its rather small rooms, every summer for some years he had always occupied the same room, one of the largest and most beautiful, with two windows looking on to the lake. He had divided the large room into two parts with a tall screen of Japanese silk, quaintly bordered with flowers and plants, animals and figures. On one side the bedroom was isolated, on the other quite a little *salon* had been devised, with his arm-chairs, writing-table, and little tables, and on this ordinary furniture Lucio had placed fabrics, vases, photographs, a shining silver writing-*nécessaire*, a red leather writing-case, and some pocket-books; in fact, everything personal and intimate that can conquer the discouraging banality of an hotel bedroom. Although the dinner-hour was drawing rapidly near, Lucio remained in his arm-chair, still in the dressing-gown he had donned an hour ago on returning from a walk. His servant, Francesco, who for ten years had followed him everywhere, and who in the ten years had especially learned never to direct a remark to his master except when asked, and then to reply in the least number of words possible, had noiselessly prepared on the other side of the screen what was necessary for his master's evening toilette, even to another cigarette-case

full of cigarettes and a silk neckerchief to place under the overcoat, and silently and discreetly had vanished, shutting the door without noise. Probably Lucio Sabini had not even been aware of his presence. It was nearly eight o'clock. There was a knocking at the door. With a start Lucio, still *distract* and far away, called out, "Come in."

"I am come to say good-bye," said Franco Galatà, entering, and offering his hand to Lucio.

Lucio conjured a vague smile, took the hand, looked for his cigarette-box, and opened it.

Franco Galatà, Prince of Campobello, was a Sicilian gentleman of thirty-five, who passed but two or three months of the year at Palermo and one at Licata, where his property was. The rest of the year he was always travelling, to Rome, Paris, Biarritz, Ostend; to Monte Carlo, Cairo, and St. Moritz, always mixing with the most brilliant society, knowing everything and everybody. Of medium stature, but lean and robust, very brown of countenance, with a little spiked beard, and two very black eyes, slightly bald, a very good fencer, a perfect and tireless dancer, speaking French and English, and even Italian, with a strong Sicilian accent, Franco Galatà, Prince of Campobello, at first succeeded in being attractive; but his attraction did not last. His acquaintances changed frequently, not from year to year, but from season to season. People with whom he was intimate for three months, on the fourth month greeted him no more, and he himself avoided them, proudly and mockingly. Friends liked him for a short time, and then suddenly spoke ill of him, and he, Franco Galatà, spoke ill of them. Women grew agitated in speaking of him, changed the subject, or withdrew. Lucio Sabini gave the Prince of Campobello a worldly sympathy, very uncertain and very superficial, in which at bottom there was doubt and repugnance.

"Are you leaving St. Moritz?" he asked courteously.

"I am leaving this hotel, dear Sabini. I am going to the Grand Hotel. I waited till they had a room free. This evening I am going to occupy it."

"Don't you like the 'Badruth'?"

"Oh, a regular box. There's nothing to do," exclaimed the Sicilian.

"What do you mean?"

"With the ladies, I mean to say," explained Franco Galatà.

"Don't you think there are beautiful women here?" suggested Lucio, becoming very cold and staring at the Prince of Campobello.

"Here? Very few: well acquainted with me and all, and I very well known to them. There's nothing to do," he repeated, with an even harder accent; "therefore I am going elsewhere."

"You travel to find women?" asked Lucio coldly, placing himself in unison with Galatà.

"For nothing else," affirmed the Prince of Campobello. "It is the only thing that interests me, pleases me, amuses me. I find nothing else better in life, such as it is," and he sighed lightly.

"And do one or many please you?"

"They all please me, even the least beautiful and the least young. Those who please me most are the ones I can't possess," concluded Galatà, with a slightly irritable accent.

"And do you never fall in love?" asked Lucio icily.

"In love? Not at all. I should be silly to let myself fall in love. Sometimes they believe I am in love; and sometimes love matters nothing at all to them," murmured the Prince cynically.

"Therefore you are going to the Grand Hotel," said Lucio, with a sneer.

"Naturally! What is one to do in a small hotel, with

such few people as we are, all acquainted with each other? Everything is noted and observed, everything is heard. Hurrah for the large hotels, Sabini! For every reason there is nothing like them for what I want. Plenty of unknown or little-known women; I unknown to them or little known; immense *salons*, immense halls, vast terraces—the earthly paradise, my friend, the paradise of adventures of a day, of three days, of a week, especially when they are on the point of leaving . . . when they are unlikely to be seen again, you understand, they dare more easily.”

The Prince of Campobello laughed, with his red, carnal, sensual mouth beneath his black moustaches; and his black beard shook a little, and his eyes shone with a desire that was ever satisfied and ever unsatisfied.

“But these women whom you meet on your travels, dear Galatà, are they easy to conquer?” asked Lucio, with cynical curiosity.

“Ah, not all certainly, my friend; but I try with all.”

“With all?”

“No one excluded. It is my method. I assure you it is the best way.”

There was a brief silence. Lucio did not interrupt him.

“I like you so much; come away with me to my hotel,” said Galatà familiarly, not heeding the silence.

“You think so?” murmured the other, fencing, with the coldest politeness.

“I have got to know that there are some very eccentric Russian women, also two or three divorced English women, a *demi-vierge* or two. Come, we will amuse ourselves. Do not remain in this virtuous barrack.”

“Oh, I shouldn’t amuse myself there,” declared Lucio, somewhat decisively.

“What? Don’t you like women?”

" Yes ; but one at a time."

" Really ? And are you capable of loving the one ? Seriously ? " exclaimed Galatà, astonished and almost scandalised.

" I am even capable of loving the one seriously."

" For some time ? Then you give her up ? "

" Later, much later, I give her up . . . when I have ceased to love her."

" What ingenuousness ! " exclaimed the Prince of Campobello, astonished.

" Infantile, infantile ! I have no spirit in these love affairs," said Lucio Sabini, with a sneer ; " but I wish you every success there ! You shall tell me about it afterwards when we meet."

" All you want to know. A pity you won't come."

They took leave of each other at the door. Coming down the corridor someone was advancing towards Lucio. He stopped beside him, while the Prince of Campobello, after a slight, sarcastic smile, which the new-comer did not see, withdrew with the elastic step of a good fencer and dancer. With a rearward movement at the threshold of his room, Lucio Sabini tried to escape the meeting and conversation with Serge de Illyne ; but he did not succeed. Serge, bending his tall stature and his beautiful face, said to him in the purest French, in a musical voice :

" Allow me ; I should like to say a few words."

Lucio, with bad grace, was forced to stand aside and let him pass. Serge de Illyne remained standing because the other did not ask him to sit down. He was a tall young man, of almost statuesque figure, in modern attire. He was already in evening dress, with a stupendous orchid in the buttonhole and a peculiar waistcoat of pale green velvet, with oxidised silver buttons. Serge was of rare masculine beauty, with a very white complexion, large, dark eyes loaded with melting sweetness, a florid

mouth beneath the soft, light chestnut moustaches, and a round, white neck. His perfectly shaped, pink hands were loaded with quaint rings, of antique shape, with gems of strange colours, and beneath his shirt-cuff a gold bracelet fell over his wrist, in the fashion of a snake with carbuncle eyes.

"Why, dear Count Sabini," asked the Russian, in his sing-song voice, "do you smoke those bad cigarettes? Let me send you some of my exquisite ones!"

"Thank you!" said Sabini a little curtly, "but I am used to my own."

The Russian, in a tranquil attitude, with his beautiful face on which bloomed a smile, was not discouraged.

"Do you use *eau de Lubin*?" he resumed. "Why don't you use a mixture of *ambre* and *chypre*? I assure you they are delicious."

And he offered him a pink, bejewelled hand, as if to make him smell it. Sabini pretended not to notice it. He neither touched nor smelt the hand and replied rudely:

"They are perfumes for women, in fact for *cocottes*. I don't like them."

The young Russian shook his head graciously. Then seeing that Lucio Sabini, staring a little impatiently, was questioning him with his eyes, he said:

"I came to ask you, dear Sabini, if you would accompany us after dinner to St. Moritz Bad."

"With you and others? With whom, then?"

"Why, first of all with me, and with Hugo Pforzheim, you know, dear Hugo, the graceful German, and Lewis Ogilvie, the Scotch psychologist who has invented the theory of the music of colours, and James Field, another friend, an artist of the pencil. His drawings are stupendous; don't you know them?"

"All your set, in fact?" asked Lucio, restraining his disgust.

"Of course, all our set," murmured Serge de Illyne candidly; "we are going to Reginald Rhodes's—you must know the name, for he is already celebrated—the English poet. He has condescended to read us a poem this evening, an unpublished poem, on a fascinating subject."

"Which is?"

"'Narcissus' is the title."

"Ah," exclaimed Lucio Sabini, at the height of impatience, "and you want me to come as well? Are there to be ladies there?"

"Oh, no, no!" exclaimed Serge, with a gesture of annoyance; "we never have women with us."

"You dislike them, eh?" sneered Lucio.

"We don't dislike them. We think them vain, silly, useless creatures," said de Illyne contemptuously.

"Well, if there are no women I can't come," concluded Lucio, smiling sarcastically; "I like women's society."

"*Dommage, dommage!*" murmured the Russian, in his melodious voice.

"This evening I have a lover's tryst," said Lucio Sabini roughly.

"Oh," exclaimed Serge, as if scandalised, but questioning with his beautiful, tender eyes.

"Really: a lover's tryst. And I must leave you to dress," insisted Lucio, still somewhat insolently.

"With whom—a lover's tryst?" murmured Serge de Illyne.

Lucio then looked at him with such intense and silent disdain on his face that the handsome Russian paled a little, turned on his heels, and departed, bowing his tall person with the statuesque figure, while Lucio Sabini, with an energetic movement of the shoulders, disguised as an offensive farewell, retired behind the screen to dress. His toilette was, more than usual, long and

accurate. He had almost finished when he heard a voice calling him from the other side of the screen.

"Sabini, are you ready? Are you coming to dinner?"

Lucio put forth his head only from the screen and recognised Francis Mornand, a French gentleman, who had entered the room without Lucio being aware of it. Very thin, pallidly brown, with a clean-shaven face on which a calm and peaceful expression of correctness was permanently spread, with close-cropped hair, still black at the forehead, but slightly sprinkled with white at the temples, with monocle fixed without support, causing not a single wrinkle to the face, and dressed in austere elegance, when he was silent Francis Mornand had a more English than French appearance. But no one ignored the fact that he was one of the wittiest men in Engadine society, as of any society in which he happened to find himself. Everyone knew that, having lived thirty or forty years in the great cosmopolitan world, with an iron memory and an extraordinary adaptability of spirit, he was a *conteur* without a rival.

"I am nearly ready, Mornand," replied Sabini, with a smile, "but whither will you lead me?"

"First to dinner with me, then to our place."

"I must dine in haste, because it is late," replied Sabini, who had again gone behind his screen.

"As you like. Afterwards we will take a turn."

"Where?" replied the other, without any curiosity.

"To St. Moritz Bad, to the 'Kurhaus,' where the great tenor Caruso is singing for a charity. I have some tickets, also for you. After midnight to the 'Palace.' Paul Fry—you know him—has arrived, the greatest cutter at baccarat, who always cuts a five. There is to be a play to-night, when all the ladies have gone to bed. It is to be a great game—most interesting. All those who have no money play hard."

"I can't come," replied Lucio Sabini, stepping into the room, already dressed.

"And why?" asked Francis Mornand, with a little smile.

"Because I have to go elsewhere."

"Elsewhere?" asked the Frenchman.

Again Lucio did not reply. He took from a glass vase a magnificent white rose, a single rose, and placed it in the buttonhole of his dress-suit.

"You are going to the ball at the 'Kulm.' You are very much in love with Miss Lilian Temple," said Francis Mornand kindly, with a slight smile.

Lucio stood still, with lowered eyes, and made no reply.

"Well, dear Sabini, at any rate if you will dine with me, since I am all alone this evening, I will tell you the history of Miss Lilian Temple," declared Mornand, in an indifferent tone, without even looking at his companion.

"Her history? Her history?" blurted Lucio, with a tremble in his voice. "Has Lilian Temple a history?"

"See how much in love you are, Sabini!" added Francis Mornand, chuckling quietly. "Confess that you love her."

"I adore her," replied Lucio simply.

"Well, my dear fellow," declared the amiable Frenchman, placing his arm in Lucio's, with affectionate familiarity, "Miss Temple has no history. She is an ideal creature; and if I say so you can believe me. But if you do not cruelly desert me at dinner, I can tell you the history of Miss Lilian Temple's family, which I knew well in London. That ought to interest you a lot, if you really love her."

"I adore her," repeated Sabini, and his words were veiled with emotion. "Let us go."

CHAPTER IX

NEARLY all the women and girls who had come that evening to the great ball at the "Kulm" were dressed in white. In the immense hall that—with its richly painted but very low ceiling, the general vastness of which is broken by strange pillars, broad and low to support it—resembles, or is meant to resemble, an Egyptian temple; in this immense and characteristic hall, where the whole of one wall opened out on to a verandah of shining glass, overlooking lake and wood, a crowd of women kept fluctuating, gathering in groups or separating amongst the pillars or thick clusters of green plants, as they sat for a while on the divans and rocking-chairs, or rose to go to the *salons* or the ballroom. And all this whiteness of cambric and silk, of lace and tulle, of marble and silver united and melted together, contrasted and harmonised, as if in a *chorale* of whiteness, with livelier and calmer shades or softer blendings of white. In the long corridor which separates or leads to the hall on the right, with drawing-rooms and reading or conversation-rooms, and to the left to the majestic ballroom, on the velvet benches were two rows of girls and women, nearly all dressed in white, who were talking quietly to their neighbours, as they scarcely waved their white gauze and lace fans. Other ladies in white were coming and going along the corridor, from the hall to the ballroom, in couples and groups, chatting in a low voice with whomsoever was accompanying them. Only here and there appeared a pale blue dress, or a pink or yellow, to be overcome at

once by twenty or thirty white dresses. Occasionally in the quiet corners of the hall, at the back of the reading, conversation, and smoking rooms, appeared elderly ladies, dressed in black and in rich, heavy stuffs, such as black velvet and brocade. On the grey and white head shone an old diamond ornament, or some old jewel flashed on the covered bosom, where it fastened a rich scrap of old lace.

Nothing but English, though of course in different accents, was to be heard. English and American women were fraternising ; the English, gentle but reserved, the Americans more expansive and more charming, were gathered together in the hall and rooms, especially in the famous corridor, while outside, from the other hotels of the Dorf and Bad and from the villas, guests began to arrive. The English ladies of the " Kulm " watched the arrivals with discreet or even cold glances, and if they were surprised in the act of watching, they quickly turned their eyes to another part, detachedly, with that perfect power of correct isolation which is one of the greatest spiritual gifts of the English. More happily curious, the American ladies turned and smiled or uttered a rapid word or two in a whisper ; but no one caught the comments, so subdued and brief were they. A French woman, the Marquise de Brialmont, with a great mass of light golden hair, on which she had placed a very large hat of black tulle, covered with black feathers, dressed in black lace, arrived, appeared, and passed with a rustling of silken skirts, leaving a strong perfume behind her. Miss Ellis Robinson, amidst a group of English friends, slowly fanned herself while her friends got ready. Lia Norescu, as beautiful as a spring dawn, in a cloudy dress of very pale blue, with imperceptible silver revers waving like a flower in a light breeze, with a silver ribbon that surrounded her shining brown hair, entered, followed by five or six of her suitors,

and further, behind by her silent mother, in the violet brocade dress of patient and somnolent mothers who wait evening and night for their daughters to finish dancing and flirting. Lia Norescu's beautiful mouth curved in a fleeting sneer of disdain at the crowd of white-clad English women, some of whom were beautiful, some less so, others not at all in their dresses which were too simple and unpretentious, with the fresh flower in the hair. But none of the English girls seemed to be aware of her. Madame Eva Delma, a theatrical celebrity, who earned two hundred francs at each performance, entered—she was an enormously fat Australian who came every year to St. Moritz in the attempt to get even a little thinner—dressed entirely in red, which made her more conspicuous, breathless from the few steps she had climbed, and followed by a pale, thin little husband. Other guests arrived, some loudly, others fashionably dressed, and in spite of the rather too pronounced splendour or refined elegance of the French, Russian, Belgian, Austrian, and Italian ladies, the English girls with their fair hair simply adorned with flowers, and the American girls with their black helmets of dark hair, overwhelmed them by their large numbers; and contrasted with the few red, black, yellow, and blue dresses, all their white dresses formed the harmony and beauty of that immense picture.

When Lucio Sabini, after leaving his hat and coat in the cloak-room, entered the "Kulm" hall alone, he at once perceived that the ball had begun. The spacious room, with its appearance of a Pharaoh's temple, was almost deserted; the bright light of the electric lamps illuminated the thick clumps of palms, the rich baskets of flowers which adorned the recesses, and a few old ladies who were staying behind, lost and swallowed up by remote corners. He scarcely hurried his step in the almost deserted corridor, giving a glance to the sitting-

rooms on the right, where some old gentlemen and ladies were reading papers or playing bridge in silence, while there reached him, now stridently, now languidly, the burthen of the Boston waltz from the ballroom. Half-way down the corridor he saw a girlish figure in a white dress advancing towards him, and he recognised her at once from afar. He stopped, expecting her to recognise him as she advanced with bowed head at a rapid pace ; but she only did so when close to him. A light cry of surprise and emotion issued from Lilian Temple's lips, and a blush covered her face to the roots of her fair hair.

" Ah, here you are ! " she stammered, perceiving that by her blushing she was betraying her emotion too much.

" Here I am," murmured Lucio Sabini, taking her ungloved hand, and barely brushing it with his lips.

Alone in that deserted corridor they glanced at each other two or three times. Lilian Temple was dressed in a white stuff, a light silk that resembled a muslin, which assumed simple and pure lines with a very slight rustling. A large white ribbon, knotted behind, formed a belt, and fell in two long streamers. The corsage was modestly opened in a round at the neck and bust ; it was trimmed with a fine tulle which gave a cloudy appearance to the stuff and the transparent complexion. Round her neck she wore a black velvet ribbon with three little silver buckles. She had at her waist three magnificent white roses ; in the fair hair, of a childish fairness, which she knotted on her pretty head in three coils, she had placed amidst the curls another white rose. Her whole being breathed youth, freshness, and purity. Everything about her was more than ever virginal and alluring—the deep blue eyes, the transparent pearliness of the face and neck and bosom, the sudden changes of colour in the face, and the open and disappearing smile.

"And Miss Ford?" asked Lucio at last.

"She is playing bridge with some friends," replied Lilian slowly.

"Does she like bridge? *Brava*, Miss Ford!" he said, with a smile of satisfaction.

Again they were silent, looking at each other.

"Thank you for the beautiful flowers," she continued, in a low voice.

He looked at the roses Lilian kept at her waist and the rose that was languishing amidst her hair. They were those he had sent her in the afternoon.

"Thank you, Miss Temple, for honouring my flowers," said Lucio, in his subdued and penetrating voice; "I wear your colours, as you see."

She looked at the white rose he had in his buttonhole, and smiled slightly.

"After the ball, Miss Temple, we will make an exchange. You shall give me the rose that has been in your hair or one from your waist, and I will give you mine, if you like."

Lilian Temple listened with her little blond head inclined, just like a bird's.

"Will you give me one of your roses?" he asked, in a still lower and more penetrating voice, "one of your roses to keep me company after I leave you to-night, when I am alone in my room? Will you give me one?"

As if to speak better, he took the little, long white hand without a glove and pressed it slightly between his own.

She raised her pure eyes, blue as periwinkles, to him and replied in a faint voice:

"Yes."

"And you will keep the rose I have worn beside you to-night, Miss Temple? You will keep it? To remind you of me to-night and to-morrow?"

In his subdued voice there was more than tenderness, there was ardour, an ardour violent and repressed, as he squeezed the little, imprisoned hand.

"I will keep it," she said, with a trembling of her lips that were speaking, and a trembling of her little hand between those of Lucio Sabini.

Someone was coming from the ballroom and from the hall. He let the little hand fall. Regaining her composure she said :

"Won't you come with me to the ballroom ? "

"Later on, Miss Temple," replied Lucio, still a little disturbed.

"Oh, no, at once ! " exclaimed Miss Temple gracefully. "It is a beautiful ball, and full of such pretty girls, Signor Sabini."

"All English, I imagine. Then they must be very pretty."

"There are many Americans ; but they are very beautiful too. Oh, I like all this so much," she said, with ingenuous enthusiasm.

"So you like a ball, Miss Temple ? "

"Of course," and she smiled with simple, youthful gaiety.

"And you want to dance ? " he murmured, frowning.

"Why, yes ! "

"With whom do you wish to dance ? " he insisted, a little seriously.

"With you if you like," she answered, understanding at last what he meant.

"All the time with me ? " he asked, with a stern face, as if he were imposing a condition.

"All the time with you," she accepted, with a smile. He was more than ever intoxicated by that smile ; but he knew how to control himself. He gave her his arm and they proceeded to the door of the ballroom. But a crowd, of men in particular, cumbered the threshold

and prevented people from entering and leaving ; so they waited patiently till they could enter. They waited some time, exchanging a few words *sotto voce*, she lifting her little blond head to his, where nestled the fragrant white rose he had given her, and fixing his eyes with that glance which bewitched him, so much did it give to him the complete expression of a fresh, young, virginal soul, so much did he perceive gathered there all the moral beauty and loyal tenderness of a fresh, young, virginal heart. He bent over her, dominating her with his black, calm, thoughtful eyes, sometimes crossed by a gleam of passion, with the virile and noble expression of his brown, rather thin face, but where all the characteristics were of energy ; dominating her with soft, low words, pronounced in that tone of sincerity that the more simple womanly ear appreciates and understands. However, if the man was deeply charmed and subjugated by her who was beside him, he was an expert in hiding from the world what he was experiencing ; hence his face disclosed nothing, while she, as she looked at him and listened to him, appeared in her silence, even in her immobility and perfect composure, to be taken and conquered. At last, carried on by a flow of people that pressed and drove them, they managed to enter the majestic ballroom together.

Round the walls there was a triple row of ladies seated, looking on and criticising. The seats were set very close together and the women were elbow to elbow and shoulder to shoulder, and among them, behind, were the men very close together, scarcely seated on a corner of their chairs, or standing and occupying the least space possible, hidden behind skirts which spread themselves, showing only their heads between two ladies' shoulders, bending on one side to talk to the lady they were beside, while the ladies raised their heads with a gentle movement, smiling and showing white teeth, occasionally raising

their fans to the height of their lips, as if to hide from strangers their smiles, to show them only to him who was beside them. At the back of the room were eight or ten sets of men and women who had found no seats, but who kept close to each other in couples, waiting patiently to find a seat or to dance together. In the middle of the room, in a broad vortex that grazed those who were seated around, that made those who were on foot draw back from its whirl, in a broad vortex that grew longer according as it followed the longer walls of the room or grew denser along the shorter sides, in a vortex, now soft, now rapid, now denser and now thinner, many men and women were dancing, with a revolving of white dresses and black suits, while the triple hedge around alternated with black and white. Blond heads with delicate faces and blue eyes, a little bent as if to follow the music, revolved now softly, now quickly ; gentle feminine figures in the whiteness of gauze and the brightness of silken girdle, revolved amidst the clouds of white skirts that wrapped themselves round their slender persons. The faces of the men—some young and others not so young—drew nearer to those of their partners in the musical rhythm, as strong or graceful arms upheld them in a firm embrace : a male hand pressed a little white-gloved hand in support. The heads of the English girls, adorned with flowers, were sedate, and sedate were their rosy faces, while their figures as they danced preserved a chaste appearance, as if the pleasures of the dance were nothing to them. On the, for the most part, clean-shaven faces of their partners a perfect correctness was to be noted. And all those blond heads of the women and clean-shaven faces of the men, the hundred or two hundred couples, of cavalier and lady, of girl with bright eyes, and youth with large mouth and perfect teeth, as they stood or sat down, danced or rested, seemed to have silently

sworn never to separate that night, and this with the most perfect naturalness.

In drawing-rooms and sitting-rooms mothers, aunts, and relations were reading papers they had already read, or were playing at bridge, while many of them slumbered with eyes open, blinking from boredom and weariness ; but none of them were troubling about their daughters and nieces. The young women and girls, the demoiselles of thirty, and the scraggy old maids touching forty, in white dresses, with hair curled in front and ribbon round the neck, from the moment the ball began were accompanied by lads and youths or older men with whom they were flirting. They did nothing but chat with, smile, or look at their flirt, or dance with him or another flirt, in perfect liberty and composure, each couple to themselves, without troubling about the flirting of their neighbours, nor did their neighbours seem to be aware of theirs. They were amusing themselves with that English tranquillity that is so astonishing, because it resembles boredom—the couples were pleased with each other, but with a gentle seriousness in acts and words and an occasional fleeting smile. Perhaps they were in love with each other, as many people love each other in other countries, that is to say with secret ardour ; but so secret was it that nothing escaped thereof, showing instead a serenity that seems genuine, and perhaps is, and though they experience love's tumult in the depths of the soul, they have the strength to control that tumult.

More impulsive and impetuous, the actions of the American girls with their admirers and flirts were livelier, their words deeper and their laughter more frank. A keener life palpitated in their eyes full of gaiety, in their nostrils which seemed desirous of inhaling every perfume and in their parted lips. They shook their heads of dark hair, whose waves were peculiarly lowered over

the forehead, and their actions were coquettish as they offered their ball programmes, opened their fans, or took their partner's arm. In their dancing there was no stiffness of movement, and no angles. They danced to perfection after much practice in their own country, with a frank pleasure that was expressed in their glance and laughter, and a ready grace and freedom that was a little superb. To their suitors and flirts they imparted an almost Southern *brio*, and a flow of youth and love emanated from them, compared with the coldness and reserve of the English couples.

Thirty or forty couples whirled round to the tune of the "Boston" waltz, and the slender feet of the American girls, shod in satin and transparent stockings, appeared and disappeared amid the flowing lace petticoats, while their partners and their flirts smiled at them in manifest pleasure that nothing could conceal. Amidst the somewhat baptismal cambric dresses, with their heavenly bows, pink and yellow, of the three English sisters, Evelyn, Rosamond, and Ellen Forbes, passed Miss Katherine Breadley, the American in the Empire gown, so disturbing in its too audacious lines and so seductive, as well, on the arm of her French flirt, the Comte de Roy, the youth of a great princely house, whom she smilingly called Monseigneur. By the Misses Atwel, the little English girls dressed in white, on whose heads were withering wreaths of myosotis, passed in dancing Miss Betty Finch, the enchanting modern Grecian of Fifth Avenue, in *crêpe de Chine*, smiling at the Vicomte de Lynen, her Belgian flirt and partner. There crossed the room without dancing, but with the authority of *un vieux garçon* who has toured the world and known the whole of society, Miss Ellis Robinson, accompanied step for step by her Italian flirt, Don Carlo Torriani, who has sworn to make her renounce celibacy; and the enormous solitaires of the American woman shone in

curious contrast with the little gold crosses of the English girls. But in Britannic form, in American, in European, in every form, only flirtation governed and dominated, enveloped and transformed, that dance at the "Kulm" on that summer evening. Lia Norescu, the exquisite creature in her blue dress, the flower of beauty, surrounded by her court, having found other courtiers there, passed from one to another, dancing like a sylph on the meadows almost without touching ground, with her light feet shod in pale blue. She danced in the middle of the room, the better to be seen, the better to be admired, and intoxicated her cavaliers with her smile, one after the other of whom she dismissed but who returned to her subdued, and whom she took back in a most capricious game of flirtation. The Comtesse de Brialmont, as she danced with the Count of Seville, a Spaniard, who was said to be the nephew of an ex-queen, a morganatic nephew, whom she had seized from a friend of hers, bit her lips as she almost dragged her partner along in the "Boston." Suddenly even Eva Delma, enormous, like a great Caryatid, sallied forth to dance with a graceful youth whom she devoured with her eyes. English flirts, American flirts, European flirts, caprice, light love, love, passion, fair heads and brown heads, chaste gowns and audacious gowns, hands interlaced and shoulders too near, tender smiles and intoxicating glances, beauty of innocence and conscious beauty—how everything exhaled, emanated, and spread in the air, penetrating senses and hearts that night in the ball at the "Kulm"! Suddenly a couple appeared in the middle of the room, and a large circle was reverently made. They were Mrs. and Mr. Arnold, both seventy, who had been married for forty years. She, with her completely white hair and rosy face, was most attractive; he was less white, but more robust and red in the face. For forty

years these two people had never left each other, and they had come to St. Moritz from time immemorial. They had been guests at the "Kulm" ever since its foundation. Every year they suddenly sallied forth to dance, she composed and serene, he elegant in his strength. And Mr. and Mrs. Arnold, in their flirtation of ten lustres, seemed to be the symbol of all the flirtation of which air, light, flowers, women and men were formed and transformed that night of the ball at the "Kulm." Smiles and discreet English applause greeted the couple; the Americans, laughing, applauded more loudly, but few of the other nations did so. And around the two almost a hundred couples began to dance, amongst whom were Lilian Temple and Lucio Sabini.

Lilian danced well, but with some stiffness, as if through reserve she were unwilling to yield herself to the too brilliant tunes to which the dancing couples whirled ever more gaily, as if unwilling to yield to the too soft harmonies that seemed to strike with an almost amorous languor those who were dancing. Erect like a light stalk, hardly supported at the waist by Lucio's arm, Lilian Temple turned her head a little on one side, as if unwilling to meet her partner's gaze. Lucio Sabini danced to perfection, with that sense of musical rhythm which belongs to all Italians, and with a virile grace that emanated from every act of his; and he fixed his eyes on his lady's face, while he impressed on her, with an arm that scarcely guided her, a rapid or a softer movement. At first surprised and then annoyed to find her without response, and without a tremor, in a dance that he rendered ever more enticing, amongst the crowd of women and men who were nearly all transported, not only by the enjoyment of the dance, but by a more intimate and more secret joy, he suddenly said to her in the rather rough voice of his moments of ardour, which always appeared in contrast to his feelings:

"Does dancing bore you, Miss Temple?"

"No, Signor," she murmured smilingly, "on the contrary, I am very fond of it."

"Then you don't care about dancing with me?" he suggested, even more roughly.

"Why do you think that?" she asked, blushing a little, lowering her eyes, with a veil of sadness in her voice.

"I don't know," he replied vaguely, "I don't know; I thought so."

They turned more quickly; he raised her as if he wished to make her fly, and she, even more lightly, scarcely seemed to touch the ground; a fine smile parted her rosy lips, trembling a little at having to dance so fast, and for an instant her deep blue eyes, pure and tender, fixed themselves on the brown, thoughtful eyes of Lucio Sabini. It was only a fleeting smile, the glance of an instant, but, disturbed and moved, he asked her:

"Do you like dancing with me?"

"Yes," she answered, very softly.

She said nothing more. The graceful face recomposed itself into its serenity, and the dance ceased. In silence he offered her his arm, and without even asking her went towards the ballroom door, desirous of leaving. But other couples had left for the corridor, some slowly, others hurriedly, to look for a quiet corner. Lucio, accustomed to command, hid his annoyance with the people he found everywhere; Lilian followed him in silence, without questioning, allowing him to lead her where he willed. In the middle of the corridor Miss May Ford came towards them, as she left a small sitting-room. She was dressed in black satin with a magnificent white lace scarf on her arm and a jewelled flower in her sprinkled hair. She had a gentle but composedly affectionate smile for Lilian.

"The game is over, darling. It is late, I am retiring," she said, in a quite English tone of simplicity. "Are you staying?"

"I shall stay, dear," replied Lilian simply.

"I expect you will stay till the end, darling?"

"I expect so too," replied Lilian frankly.

"Then good night, dear. Good night, Signor Sabini."

Miss Ford withdrew with that freedom and indifference which astonishes anyone who is not English, and which, instead, is the expression of their respect for other people's liberty and their own. And Lucio, pressing Lilian's arm lightly beneath his own as they went towards the hall, said:

"Now you are in my hands, Miss Temple."

"Oh!" she exclaimed, frowning slightly and lowering her eyes.

He stopped, corrected, a little confused, and recognised his mistake.

"I have said something wrong, Miss Temple."

She became silent; as it happens at times when one has an unpleasant thought, and from politeness one does not wish to utter it.

"I beg pardon, Miss Temple: I beg pardon frankly. I am thirty-five, but sometimes I am a naughty boy."

Still she was silent, and a little pale.

"Tell me that you forgive me, Miss Temple: tell me that, I beg of you," he exclaimed agitatedly. "You know I am a boy sometimes."

She gave a friendly little nod of the head, but nothing more. And he understood he could ask no more at that moment. They entered the hall; but still there were people round all the little tables where during the day tea was taken. Other couples were seated beneath the thick clumps of green plants; others were further off towards the corners of the immense crypt that reminded

one of the monuments of Sesostres and Cleopatra—everywhere a man and a woman. Lucio and Lilian gave a long sweeping glance at the hall, the same glance. They had the same singular expression of fraternal sympathy with the surroundings and the people. They made the same mutual movement in turning and going back to the corridor, seeking together, without saying so or confessing it, a more secluded, solitary spot. After wandering in the corridor for a little in silence, while from the ballroom the call of a very lively two-step reached them, they entered one of the reading-rooms. The hour was late : they only found an old lady there reading a review with silver-rimmed glasses bent over her nose, and a tiny little lace cap on her white hairs. An old gentleman in another corner was reading the "Norddeutsche Zeitung." They neither turned nor raised their heads when Lucio and Lilian entered very quietly and sat down far away from the two in a corner ; she in an arm-chair of dark leather, he in another which he drew much nearer to hers. And their words proceeded in almost a whisper so as not to disturb the two old people who were reading.

"Are you cross with me, Miss Temple ? " he asked humbly.

With her little hand she made a polite gesture that he should speak no more of the matter.

"Have you forgotten ? "

"I have forgotten."

"Are you my friend ? "

She looked at him and made no reply.

"As at first, I mean to say," he corrected himself.

"Yes, as at first," she murmured thoughtfully.

Lilian kept her slender hand on the arm of the chair. He watched the old lady with the silver glasses and the old gentleman with the flowing beard. They neither turned round nor saw : they were immersed in their

reading. Then he placed his hand on Lilian's. She did not withdraw it, and he gave a sigh of joy.

"You must be very indulgent and merciful to me, Miss Temple," he said, with a rather sad accent. "Sometimes I seem wicked, sometimes—far too often—I seem perverse."

She looked at him with her beautiful, candid eyes.

"It is the ancient man that arises, Miss Temple; a man who has suffered and caused suffering," he proceeded sadly. "I need kindness and pity so much to be a good, loyal man as I was once, as I should like to be again."

"Whatever are you saying?" she asked, marvelling, and a little anxiously.

"You have the salvation of my soul in your hands, Lilian," he said to her, in so serious a tone that she could not think of being offended because he had called her by her name so suddenly.

More than ever anxiety disturbed the beautiful, soft, virginal face.

"Do you laugh at this humble hope, Lilian? do you laugh at this immense hope? Do you wish me to save myself to end by losing myself?" he continued, in that serious, touching tone of his.

"Who am I to do this?" Lilian asked, hesitating and trembling.

"You are innocence," he replied, bowing as before an image, "and you alone can save me."

"How can I do that?" she stammered, tremblingly.

"You know," he continued, with so ardent a glance that she felt herself scorched by it, from her eyes to her palpitating heart.

"Come," he murmured in her ear, "let us go and look at the summer night outside."

They rose quietly; the old lady was still absorbed in her review reading through her silver-rimmed glasses,

of which they had never heard the pages turned, and the old gentleman was hidden behind his large German newspaper, held by a stick like a paper banner. Neither of them had been aware of the presence of the two lovers, or discreetly had pretended not to be aware. As in a dream, with a far-away look in her large blue eyes, Lilian Temple followed Lucio Sabini. Silently, automatically they looked for her mantle and shawl, which were hanging on a peg in a corner of the corridor. Lucio helped her to put on the white woollen cloak, with the long sleeve-like wings prettily trimmed with white fur. He settled the shawl on her head, made of an Eastern fabric, in white gauze trimmed with silver spangles. Together they directed themselves towards a deserted room near the hall, whose balcony opened on to the large covered terrace, and large verandah with pillars: the verandah that stretched along the main body of the Hôtel Kulm, facing the lake. They did not exchange a single word, walking slowly as if absorbed. Opening the window of the balcony behind them and leaning over the balustrade, without moving they contemplated the spectacle which in solitude and silence was beneath their dreamy eyes.

The night was already late, a pungent cold, with breezes that seemed like powerful, icy gasps crossed the silent Engadine country. The pure night air was rendered quite white by the lofty brilliance of the moon, suspended over the lake like a lamp in mid-sky. Meanwhile the mountains around, far and near, were becoming obscure and gloomy with shadows, and even higher and more majestic in the gloom those that the moon did not touch and illuminate, while the opposite shores of the lake, untouched by the moon's rays, grew gloomy; in the middle its waters, touched by the moon, were scintillating. All the lake of St. Moritz, in fact, seemed like a strange cup of peculiar liquid, black and

fearsome towards the deserted shores, beneath the shadow of the mountains, brilliant as a cold, metallic liquid in the middle ; a fantastic cup containing intoxication and death on the cold summer night in the high mountains. Like night and moon the silence was supreme and everything seemed motionless. Up above a few scattered lights pointed the way from the station to the baths, but no human shadow passed there. Down below at the baths rarer and feebler light flickered now and then, if a too impetuously cold breeze reached them. In an opaque, almost spiritual, whiteness the eternal snow appeared high above, in the night, on the strange Piz Languard ; pure and spectral it appeared amidst the deep folds of Monte Corvatsch, and pale as a phantom on the far-off horizon between the two peaks of the Margna. Their souls trembling with an immense sensibility, their hearts palpitating with an immense tenderness, were struck, seized, and conquered by the majesty and purity of things in the presence of the mountains that for centuries have seen time and life pass away ; in the presence of the motionless glaciers that no sun's rays could dissolve, and the waters black as shadows or white as the moon. Side by side, they felt their hearts lifted above every little transient, paltry entanglement by so much power, beauty, and nobility ; they felt that their hearts were breaking old bonds, and that the secret of their spirit was more intense, profound, and overpowering. They felt that here was the master whom nothing could any longer resist, and that no longer could they lie or remain silent. Sweetly Lucio bent over her and sweetly he drew her to him with a light fleeting action, as he brushed the fair hair on her forehead with his lips.

"Amore mio !" he cried in Italian.

Lilian Temple became as white as her dress and veil, and white as the eternal snow of the mountains.

CHAPTER X

"HOOP-LA!" cried Mabel Clarke joyously. And bending over the neck of her yellow-dun horse she urged him to a trot; Vittorio Lante also brought his horse, a powerful black, to a trot. The amazon and her cavalier trotted side by side for some minutes in a cloud of dust. Descending by the hill that separates the Dorf from the valley of Samaden, going through the little shady, peaceful wood, grazing the tall hedges, fragrant with aroma beneath the matutinal dew, Mabel Clarke brought her horse to a walk and Vittorio Lante imitated her. But when the American girl issued from the wood on to the high road, where the broad valley of Samaden opens out, she perceived that the two equipages, the large white brake and the victoria, containing the rest of the party had made great progress and were hardly to be distinguished, being ahead beyond Celerina and on the way to Pontresina; she felt a sudden rush of infantile impatience, and inciting her horse and the cavalier who accompanied her, she wanted to catch up and pass the two carriages.

Dexterously firm in the saddle, in a dark blue habit which made her seem taller and slimmer, and a most attractive dark blue doublet, fastened by tiny buttons, with a white collar fastened by a big gold pin, with a tea rose in her buttonhole, and a round straw hat, surrounded by a blue veil that even restrained the thick, riotous, chestnut hair, and floated behind in transparent blue waves, gloved in yellow deer-skin, booted exquisitely, Mabel Clarke was more than ever fascinating

in her florid beauty, in her graceful vigour, and vibrant youth. She did not look at the very bright, almost white, morning sky, a sky of an ineffable softness. She took no heed of the fresh air, so sweet to breathe ; and she cared not for a sun that was very bland, whose rays were bright without fierceness. She gave herself up, in happy unconsciousness, to the joy of being young, healthy, beautiful, of guiding and being guided by a strong horse, faithful and safe, passing at a steady trot along the broad road, amidst the meadows soft with dew, only turning every minute to see if her cavalier, Don Vittorio Lante, were following closely. That perfect cavalier, who was trotting with ease and youthful heedlessness, was quite close to her, scarcely bending over his horse, smiling every time at the softly blue-veiled face of Mabel Clarke, who smiled at him for a moment. In the buttonhole of his riding-coat he had placed a tea rose ; beneath the brim of his soft grey felt hat a peaceful countenance revealed itself, and an expression full of happiness that was reflected from his glance. His surroundings, with their charm of air and light and perfume, did not affect him ; or perhaps they reached him through his dream. Twice with a gesture of fastidiousness the amazon and her knight were forced to rein in their horses, putting them to a walking pace, to pass the little village of Cresta and the district of Celerina, in the narrow, twisting, badly paved streets. But when once again they emerged on to the high road and had passed the sounding wooden bridge over the Inn, they yielded themselves to a strong trot, again inciting and urging each other, always gaining more ground on the carriages.

" Go ! go ! go ! " exclaimed Mabel Clarke gutturally, in English.

Already this gay chase was perceived from the carriages, and many-coloured parasols and white handkerchiefs were to be seen waved in greeting from the

brake ; the two ladies in the victoria turned their heads, more tranquilly, as if to encourage the proud riders more pacifically, who were advancing and suddenly reached and passed the victoria, Mabel Clarke sending a kiss with the handle of her whip to Mrs. Clarke and a nod to the other lady, Mrs. Gertrude Milner, Don Vittorio Lante bowing and saluting with his whip. They overtook the large brake, skirting it, the one on the right, the other on the left, where, laughing and gesticulating, Ellen and Norah West, Susy Milner, and Rachel Rodd jumped up to welcome them, as well as several young men, who in French and English also welcomed them in pleasant, jolly terms, while Mabel and Vittorio, on their part, laughing and calling out a little, responded to all the enthusiasm.

For a long portion of the road there was a war of chaff between the brake and the two riders as they came up or passed from time to time, an exchange of greetings and apostrophes in French and English, the girls pronouncing Mabel's name a hundred times, and she shaking her beautiful brown head as she smiled and laughed, her veil swelling behind her in blue waves, while Vittorio Lante played his part in regulating his black to Mabel's yellow dun ; and even he was amused by the playful briskness of their chaff.

Annie Clarke and Gertrude Milner in the victoria more quietly contented themselves with a kindly wave of the hand or a nod of the head or an indulgent little smile when Mabel and Vittorio passed them. Annie Clarke was wearing a light grey dress of masculine cut and a round hat, wrapped round with a light grey gauze veil ; beneath her white collar on the dark tie, knotted in man's fashion, a very simple pin was fixed, an enormous shining black pearl, a unique jewel. Gertrude Milner was austere dressed in black, but on the white lace which formed the yoke of her waistcoat she wore a single

string of large pearls, which she never took off. People said that Gertrude Milner even wore these pearls at night when she slept.

As they sped towards Pontresina neither the amazon nor her cavalier, nor the young girls in the brake, nor the ladies in the victoria seemed aware of how they were leaving behind them the meadows of Celerina, the distances of Samaden, and the heights of the Muottas and the Corvatsch ; the profile of Pizalbris to the left, and to the right the curve of the Fuorcla, the deep woods that alternate with arid glebe and stones and rocks, and the white Flatzbach, that milky, tumultuous torrent which comes from the white Bernina. They seemed not to see how in grandiose and solemn line the two mountains opened, to show the gigantic Roseg glacier in a bluish whiteness beneath the bland sun. Perhaps the fresh, caressing air, the vault of heaven brighter than ever, and the soft morning light vibrated within them as intimate and secret elements of serenity, content, and subtle intoxication. But none of them wanted to, or knew how to, take account of these hidden influences. They enjoyed everything without analysing, and the strong desire of arriving quickly at their goal possessed them. The horses of the riders, of the brake, of the victoria, urged on by spur and whip, sped on to arrive together more quickly than anyone had ever made the journey, with the headstrong anxiety of always being first, which is one of the forces of the American race. The maids and youths in the brake were annoyed at every other vehicle, and tried to pass them, urging on the driver, the robust Joe Wealthier, the fiancé of Ellen West. Mabel and Vittorio were annoyed with whatever they met in the way, an obstacle to their race ; and with smiling and mischievous eyes they exchanged, the American and the Italian, their impetuous desire of ever speeding ahead, as they disturbed groups of

pedestrians, and scattered clouds of dust over the other carriages. In the victoria Annie Clarke and Gertrude Milner, the two peaceful and dignified matrons, grew weary of all the other road-farers; they drew the rug over their knees in a distracted and distant manner, appearing to be not the least aware of other wayfarers on foot or in carriage. They grew proudly weary, desiring quietly, as the others desired ardently, to reach the Morteratsch glacier quickly, whither all were directed, and where they must see everything in the shortest time and return at once to St. Moritz Dorf for luncheon at the Palace Hotel.

"The lunch is execrable here at the glacier restaurant," Annie Clarke declared, with a knowing air.

Still, in spite of all their American hurry, on entering that strange district of Pontresina, studded with little wooden houses, in two rows, as if from a child's box of toys, carriage and riders were forced to go at a foot-pace. The row of carriages became much longer—hotel omnibuses, barouches coming and going in every direction to and from the Roseg, towards Samaden and the Bernina. Even denser were the people on foot, who came and went, and grouped themselves at the doors of the hotels with their hundred rooms, before the cafés and the confectionery shops—a bizarre crowd, so different from that of St. Moritz.

"*Très inélégante*, Pontresina," declared Gertrude Milner, in her turn, with American gravity.

However, they were forced to halt in the square before the Post Office, like all the other carriages, to let the horses have a moment's breather. The girls in the brake clamoured for the famous chocolate truffle of the Pasticceria, *A Ma Compagne*, so their two cavaliers jumped from the brake to go and fetch some; two others went for a whisky and soda. Vittorio Lante patiently allowed his horse to drink at a fountain near by. Mabel

approached her mother's carriage and bent over her as fresh as a flower.

"Happy, Mabel?" asked the mother tranquilly, scarcely smiling.

"Most happy, mammy, very happy!" exclaimed the daughter.

Smiling, chatting, and exchanging chocolates and caramels, the girls in the brake pretended that Joe Weather should make the horses go furiously on leaving Pontresina; but he imperturbably kept an even pace in spite of their protests. Mabel and Vittorio again trotted briskly, and even the peaceful victoria was transported at a trot. Beneath a sky increasingly pale, as if a great pallor had been diffused beneath the blue, with the light of the sun now veiled, the countryside was profoundly changed. A broad, deserted valley, between two rows of black, rocky mountains, opened out, and stretched monotonously and sadly. Here and there a rare herb grew between the rocks with some big, dusty, yellow flower. Stones were everywhere, from the little pebble to the massive boulder, heaps of dry earth were crumbling, and little mounds of black earth concealed the meagre course of a stream which now and then reappeared, weak and tinged. So silent was the sadness of that valley, and the death of everything lively and gracious, that behind her blue veil Mabel's grey eyes grew disturbed and she felt the need of breaking the sad silence that oppressed her, and of hearing the voice of her cavalier.

"Do you love all this, Lante?"

They were alone, sufficiently far from the carriage; their horses close together, head to head, relaxed their pace to the reins held slackly in their hands.

"I love you, Miss Clarke," he replied promptly, with an unwonted impulse, more passionate than sentimental.

"Do you even love me here, in this arid, gloomy place?" she asked, as if another, a more intense amorous declaration were necessary for her, to conquer, perhaps, the melancholy that weighed her down, or for some other mysterious uncertainty of her soul.

"Here, and everywhere, and always," he said seriously, as if he were proclaiming a shining truth and pronouncing a sublime oath.

"Ah!" she exclaimed simply, as if in a dream.

For an instant, almost in a dream, Mabel bowed her head, as if she wished to drive away every molesting care. She pulled sharply at her horse's rein, to resume a more rapid pace.

The carriages approached. Mabel and Vittorio distanced them again. The man was silent and thoughtful, as if disturbed at what had bubbled forth from his soul in a cry of sincerity. She was silent, watching him now and then, as if to scrutinise his thoughts and feelings, because the accent, which had been more earnest than she had previously heard, had reached her. The horses trotted head to head.

"Is this the Bernina road, Lante?" she asked in a low voice.

"Yes, Miss Clarke," he murmured.

"Then it is the road to Italy?"

"Exactly, to Italy, Miss Clarke."

There was an instant of silence. He leant his head towards her and said to her in a voice she had never heard before:

"Miss Clarke, shall we gallop to Italy? Together, alone, to Italy, Miss Clarke?"

She looked him frankly in the eyes, wishing to penetrate his heart and soul. And he withstood well the woman's glance, directed sharply at him in its desire to know the truth. A light laugh issued from her young mouth.

"Why do you laugh, Miss Clarke? It is not right to laugh so," he exclaimed rather harshly.

The laugh changed into such an affectionate and sincere smile that without her speaking he understood. He added anxiously, but with happy anxiety:

"Would you come, Miss Clarke? Would you come?"

"Perhaps I would come, Lante," she replied, again become serious.

"Will you come?"

"Perhaps I will come," she added gravely.

Pale with joy, he stooped and suddenly clasped her hand and kissed it in an act of devotion and dedication. Nothing more was said. The brake full of girls and young men came up to them, who continued to chatter and laugh, emitting guttural exclamations, to conquer the desolate solemnity of the country through which they were passing, and up to them came the victoria where Annie Clarke and Gertrude Milner had drawn on their heavy fur capes, since the sky was now an immense pallor above the great valley rough with boulders and rocks, and the sun, that had become a spectral pallor over the naked, rude mountains, had made them feel cold. Everyone in carriage and on horseback sighed with relief as, making the last stretch of road, wooded like the avenue of an oasis in such an austere landscape, they smiled at the foaming, sounding, clamorous cascade that in a little gorge among the trees comes from the Bernina and penetrates underground, and further off reappears a torrent, and becomes lower down a river. After a few paces all had to descend.

A wooden bridge was the extreme limit for carriages and horses. To reach the glacier it was necessary to go on foot.

"Is it impossible for all to drive?" asked Gertrude Milner, very scandalised in her American dignity.

"Impossible, dearest Gertrude," replied Annie Clarke, shaking her head. "If you are tired we can stop at the restaurant."

"The glacier is very badly managed," murmured Miss Milner, offended in her habitual laziness and her American *amour propre*.

"Very badly," agreed Mrs. Clarke, who never liked walking.

They began to walk slowly after the young people. The party walked rapidly, in couples and groups, Mabel far in advance of all, lifting over her arm the train of her riding habit, showing her slender little feet and some of her leg. Vittorio was beside her, not leaving her for a step. But in the frank sense of respect for another's liberty, which is one of the noblest things in American social life, none of the party bothered about them. Not even Mabel's mother seemed to be aware of the very open love-making, even in its correct form. Ellen and Norah West's mother had remained at Sils Maria, allowing her daughter, Ellen, to go alone with her fiancé Joe Wealthier. Mrs. Gertrude Milner worried not at all about the flirtation of her daughter, Susy, with Pierre d'Alfort, the witty and amiable young Frenchman, who fascinated the girl by the originality of his *boutades*, and much less did she trouble herself about the flirtations of her niece, Rachel Rodd, with the Vicomte de Lynen, the Belgian, a troublesome and ever-deluded hunter after a big dowry, who even here was making a false move, for Rachel Rodd was very poor, with only a dowry of one hundred thousand dollars. At times the couples met and formed large groups, whence issued jokes and laughter, only to separate spontaneously and correctly. Only Mabel and Vittorio, who had dismounted, started off at a brisk walk, as if they did not wish to be overtaken; but no one followed hard on them, for they took care to keep the distance, and no

one called after them. Suddenly, however, the party halted to look around.

The Morteratsch valley opened out on two sides, on which the mountain larches climb to a certain height, slender and brown, with supple branches ; higher up the sides rose even more naked and less green, until quite high up they were delineated against the sky, to right and left, in massy profiles of dark rock. In the middle distance and the background, in gigantic, white, rugged, naked cliffs, in colossal undulations, that had been immovable for centuries and for centuries covered with snow, as hard as the rocks it hid, the glacier opened out, arose, advanced, and took up all the horizon ; it advanced like an immense white wall, and then like an immense black wall, forward, forward, as if it were walking towards the onlooker, towards the rapt, ecstatic crowd in front—an immense peaked wall that seemed of rock but was really of ice. Three majestic peaks stood above it : on the left the Piz Bellavista, on the other side towards the left the Piz Morteratsch, and finally, very lofty, fearsome, and white without a scar or rent, the queen of mountains, the virgin of mountains—the Bernina.

Here, round the little one-storeyed restaurant, with its tables spread in the open air, some beneath an awning, round a kiosk, where post cards and little souvenirs of the Morteratsch were on sale, a whole squad of silent people were contemplating the glacier. Before it lay a stretch of ground, covered with big and little rocks brought there by the winter avalanches ; amid the boulders ran a meandering torrent, while to the right was a faintly traced little path among the rocks which higher up, as it approached the great black wall of the glacier, disappeared ; and nothing but stones and water proceeded from the glacier, where a gloomy grotto was hollowed out, which seemed like a speck in the distance.

"Why is the glacier so black in front?" Gertrude asked Annie, in a low voice.

"It is covered with rocks and earth," was the reply.

"*Dommage*," murmured Gertrude in French.

For some minutes the enchantment of the glacier remained over the crowd that was admiring it, silent and astonished. Then figures began to separate, attracted as by a magnet, and set out for the small path, while other figures more in advance were already there, small and diminishing, flitting from rock to rock—little black specks of beings who were at the grotto or coming from it. The coming and going was continuous; the men gave their hands to the ladies to make them walk more safely, or preceded them to point out the best way, while the lofty wall, all white in front, all black above, and finally at the horizon white with reflections of metallic blue and gold, in altitudes and precipices which seemed the monstrous waves of a sea petrified for ages, caused the crowd of visitors to seem even more tiny and miserable.

"We will stay here," said Annie Clarke to the party.

"We will stay," approved Gertrude Milner.

"*Au revoir, mama*," cried Mabel to her mother from afar, as she approached the glacier, accompanied by Vittorio.

"*Au revoir, au revoir*," exclaimed the young people of the party as they left.

Quietly seated at a restaurant table, beneath the awning, Annie Clarke and Gertrude Milner took a cup of tea to warm themselves, watching, without troubling, the figures of their daughters ever growing smaller, as they proceeded over the sharp rocks, along the torrent, towards the glacier.

Around them at the tables some were taking tea, others were drinking beer, and others writing on post cards. People arrived continuously from the road

behind the bridge where the carriages were halted, and others arrived from the glacier. Everywhere nothing but German was to be heard, and the very waitresses of the inn were *fräulein* who did not understand a word of English or French.

"Even here all are Germans," murmured Gertrude with a sneer, as she sipped her tea.

"And Jews! What a nuisance, dear," added the very Catholic Annie.

Mabel and Vittorio had almost reached the goal. As they approached the way became more dangerous amid the great rocks which had to be jumped, and from which it was easy to slip. Mabel's high heels made her hesitate and vacillate every moment. Frowning and anxious about making a stupid fall, she ended by placing her two hands in Vittorio's, although at first she had refused any support; then in three leaps she reached the opening of the ice grotto with him. He made her climb the last boulder, lifting her like a child, as he deposited her on a mound of earth, and so gracefully that she smiled at him adorably to thank him. The immense wall stood over their heads; through two enormous clefts they perceived its fearsome height and profundity. The enormous walls were dripping icy water, and drops of icy water fell from the arch of the cleft, whence was formed the strange grotto. Near at hand, beneath a colossal and sinuous streak of ice, which was the tail of the glacier, the torrent bubbled forth mysteriously and sped away. They penetrated beneath the white arch that overwhelmed them, amid the ice that surrounded them with a cold embrace; the gelid drops fell on their cheeks and foreheads. Vittorio felt Mabel's hand trembling a little as it sought his.

"Would you rather go out?" he asked, guessing her secret wish.

"I would rather," she replied at once.

They completed the short circuit of the grotto and left. She was pale as if she breathed with difficulty under the immense wall ; and she breathed deeply, in fact, when once again she was on rocks in the open air. She perceived a little road that climbed among the boulders to the right.

"Come," she said, approaching Vittorio.

It was not an easy or short ascent for her cavalier to a promontory which arose to the side ; and they still met people who were descending, chatting harshly in German, while further off the rest of the party followed them. Turning suddenly, they perceived that they had climbed higher than the wall of the glacier, and that it was spreading before their eyes from top to bottom in an immeasurable breadth, bounded on the right by two great moraines of black rocks, all white in the middle, and at the back climbing, heaping, sinking, rugged and profound, towards the two lofty peaks of Bellavista and Morteratsch, towards the beautiful and virginal Bernina, the mistress of the mountains. They sat down on a large rock, and both were seized and conquered by the solemn, majestic, and terrible spectacle. They were alone ; before them was the potent immensity of things that had lasted for ages and would last through the ages.

Suddenly Mabel Clarke turned to Vittorio Lante and asked him in a clear, precise voice :

"You really are free, Lante ? "

He looked into the quiet eyes that questioned him and replied sincerely :

"Yes, I am free, Miss Clarke."

Mabel still contemplated for a moment the whiteness of the far-away ice and the purity of the neighbouring snow ; her accent was again firm and fierce as she asked :

"You are poor, are you not, Lante ? "

There rose before the eyes of the Italian gentleman the more than ever impressing spectacle that elevates souls

and exalts them to supreme truth. Beside him was a creature of truth and beauty. From his ardent heart there burst forth a pure flame of truth. Courageously, without shame and with simplicity, he declared :

“ I am very poor, Miss Clarke.”

Mabel smiled as never before, and her hand brushed Vittorio's in a grateful, loyal, pure caress.

CHAPTER XI

"MISS JAMES and I prefer to drive and wait for you at Sils Maria," quietly said Miss Ford to Lucio and Lilian.

The girl remained impassive ; Lucio Sabini bowed, in token of consent. The carriage which an hour ago had brought all four to the hill of the Maloja and had waited for them there—as after having traversed the highway and the hill paths they reached on foot the top of the great wall of a peak which divides the Grissons from the Val Bregaglia, to the lofty gallery of rocks covered with moss and yellow marguerites, whence the gaze is directed down below towards Italy—and which was to bring them on the return road, first to Sils Maria and then to St. Moritz, was drawn up at a few paces from the Kursaal Maloja. Suddenly turning from that strange gallery whence, now and then exchanging a fleeting glance, Lucio Sabini and Lilian Temple had both gazed at the road to Italy, and while they drew near the vast lake which stretches from the Maloja to Sils, Lucio had proposed crossing the lake by boat as far as Sils Maria, while the empty carriage should go on and wait for them there. Lilian, without speaking, blushed—one of those blushes of joy that mounted in a wave of emotion from her neck right to the roots of her fair hair. Miss Ford, after having exchanged three or four words in English with her companion, had quietly announced her desire to go in the carriage with her, leaving the boat trip to Lilian and Lucio.

While he accompanied the two old maids to the carriage, he was once again astonished in the back of

his mind at the ever-increasing freedom with which Miss May Ford, who was Lillian's guardian and friend, often, very often, left the girl alone with him. Now and then, with his Italian mind accustomed through heredity and tradition to keep women, and especially girls, under a rigorous surveillance ; accustomed to consider woman in general as a prisoner who strives constantly to escape and around whom iron chains must be multiplied, a strange impression struck him when he discovered that Miss Ford entrusted Lillian Temple to him and Lillian trusted him, when their love-making had now become so marked that in no way was it possible to conceal it, and he very nearly felt irritated at Miss Ford's desertion of Lillian and very nearly sneered at the perfect confidence Lillian had in him. A flood of evil thoughts was poisoning him. But afterwards he thought of the admirable rectitude of the English character, which, incapable of failing, does not believe that another can fail ; he thought of the profound respect that all Englishmen have for women, above all for their sweethearts and *fiancées* ; he thought of the respect that all the English have, and have taught the Americans to have, for the liberty of others ; and he felt vulgar sentiments to be dissolved in his spirit, and ugly thoughts and mean considerations. He experienced instead the secret emotion of a man who feels himself esteemed and loved. Moreover, a singular tenderness invaded him, as he guessed the truth ; that Miss Ford, aware of their love-making, wished to provide them, in perfect good faith and generosity, with a means of getting a better understanding, in a solitude that had for witnesses the sky, the mountains, the lakes and meadows.

" At Sils Maria, then," he said, with a gracious bow as he closed the door, giving Miss Ford a grateful look.

" In front of the Hôtel Edelweiss," she replied, giving him and Lillian a friendly nod.

They watched the carriage depart and slowly proceeded towards the lake.

"Miss Ford is very fond of you, Lilian," he said, in a tender voice.

"Yes," she answered, without further remark.

"And I believe you are very fond of her."

"Yes," she replied.

He restrained a little movement of impatience. The imperturbability, the silence, and the sober replies of Lilian Temple at certain moments irritated him; the composure of the beautiful face seemed indifference to him; the scarcity and the moderation of her words seemed to him coldness and her silence lack of feeling. Then he would speak to her in a sharp voice and say violent and sarcastic things as if to startle her. An expression of wonderment and pain on Lilian's face would calm him and make him realise the truth, that he was in the presence of a different soul, a creature of another race and another land, and a profoundly different heart.

"At any rate you will like the sail on the beautiful lake? Or does nothing matter to you, Lilian?" he said to her, with a mocking smile and in an irritated tone.

"Of course it matters to me," she murmured, looking at him with her dear, blue eyes, rather sorrowfully.

"Forgive me," he said at once, softening again. "I am very exacting, I know, but sometimes you are so English, dear child."

"I thought," she said, with a mischievous little smile, "that English women were not displeasing to you."

"I adore them!" he exclaimed, in a sudden transport.

They sat in the stern of the rather large boat, which was rowed by two men. The boats were Italian and came from the Lake of Como, being transported up there every year to the lakes of Sils and St. Moritz,

climbing from Chiavenna on the large carts that ascend there every day at the beginning of the season, and are re-transported below in the middle of September. The rowers were Italians—*Comaschi*. A white awning protected the boat from the sun. For some time while the *Comaschi* rowed, cleaving the quiet waters, Lilian and Lucio were silent, letting themselves go to the train of their slow passage across the lake and the sequence of their intimate thoughts. Lucio especially liked to be quiet beside Lilian. When he was with her—and in the week after the ball at the “Kulm” he had seen her every day for two or three hours—a profound sense of sweetness kept him silent: the Italian words which should have told of his flame remained suspended on his lips; the impetuosity of his love became placated in the presence of that pure young beauty and in the complete sentimental dedication which he recognised in Lilian. He was gladly silent. Moreover, an intimate terror of saying too much consumed him, of expressing too much, of showing too much, what manner of thing was the sudden transport of love that agitated him. He feared by pronouncing definite words to make Lilian understand and himself understand, alas, how he was seized and conquered beyond caprice, beyond flirting and love-making: he feared lest she should be deeply discouraged, and he himself feared to be discouraged by a revelation that he preferred to leave latent and concealed. Instead an infinite sweetness came upon him in Lilian’s company, in solitude and in silence. Her presence filled him with a tenderness that surpassed every other feeling: he understood in those moments how he would have liked to have invoked the passing of life thus beside her, and how she carried in her hands and heart and eyes, in every act of her person, the truest and most lovable gifts of existence. The boat proceeded quietly across the limpid waters shining in the sun, and

both continued to dream their soft and quiet dream. Lilian gently clasped a bunch of Alpine flowers which she placed upon her knees, on her white cambric dress.

"Lilian, have you seen the Val Bregaglia, and amidst the light, white clouds Italy, Lilian?" he asked her softly, as if in a dream, placing a particular stress of sweetness as he pronounced and repeated her name.

"I have seen it," she replied softly.

"Do you love Italy, Lilian?"

"Of course," she replied.

Nothing more. But he felt how much that soul and heart were his, even in the modesty and moderation of her words, even in her reserved attitude and pure actions.

"There is another spot where my beautiful country can be seen," he added; "a spot loftier and more austere."

"Where?"

"At the Bernina pass, Lilian."

"Is it far?"

"Two hours and a half by carriage, perhaps three from St. Moritz. I think you have never been up there."

"No, never."

"Will you go there with me?"

"Yes," she replied at once.

"We will go, we will go," he exclaimed, a little disturbed with joy. "Up there there is a solitary height: one must go there on foot after leaving the carriage. But one sees the Val di Poschiaro—beautiful Italy!"

"We will go," she again consented.

A boat came towards them, also propelled by two rowers, proceeding, however, very slowly. A woman was within, alone, with a delicate, pale face, a rosy mouth slightly livid, and two deep blue, velvety eyes. She was Else von Landau, who was enjoying in silence

and solitude the air, the light, and the trees, whatever was healthy and pure and refreshing. With her gloved hands crossed over her knees, and her veil raised above her hat, she appeared collected and serene. With calm eyes she followed the boat with the two lovers.

"She is ill, poor thing!" murmured Lucio Sabini.

"But she will get better," added Lilian, "if she remains here for the winter."

"How do you know that?"

"The doctors say so, people say so. One gets better here in the winter. How beautiful it must be here beneath the snow," she murmured, as if to herself.

"Would you come here? Would you pass a winter here, Lilian? You are not ill, Lilian!"

"Of course I am not ill," she said slowly. "But I should prefer to be here rather than in England. There is sun here."

"But our country is Italy, the land of sun!" exclaimed Lucio Sabini.

"That is true," she said, looking at him, expecting another speech.

But he added nothing more. After a moment he resumed.

"Aren't you happy, Lilian, in England?" And he scrutinised her face keenly.

"Who told you that? My father is so good!" she exclaimed, with unwonted vivacity.

"You love him, and he loves you?"

"Yes; I love him, and naturally he loves me."

"And your stepmother: is she good?"

She was silent for a moment, seeing that he knew her family history, but she quickly resumed:

"My stepmother is good, too."

"But you cannot understand her, I believe."

"That is not her fault," she replied, with some vehemence.

"Then it is yours?"

"Not that either. It is no one's fault. It is so."

Lucio was immensely struck by her directness of character and generosity. He knew how unhappy Lilian Temple was in her family and how the father, too weak to defend and protect her, preferred to give her plenty of money and a trusty companion in Miss Ford, to let her travel as long as possible.

"You have a very beautiful soul, Lilian," he said, with deep emphasis.

She made no reply; her eyes were veiled with tears.

"You deserve to be happy, dear."

"I am happy," she said, looking at him and smiling amidst her tears.

He grew pale with love, as their row towards Sils Maria, where the two old maids were waiting for them, ended in a gentle movement, that almost seemed a gliding upon the waters. Both more moved than at any other time, more touched in the deepest essence of their souls, by that beautiful hour, by the landscape of peace and grandeur, by the words they had pronounced, by those they had not said, they experienced in every glance they exchanged, in every rare accent and gesture, an emotion they strove in vain to calm. Seated beside her, his head a little bent towards her, Lucio Sabini said nothing, but everything within him expressed the immense sympathy which bound him to the dear creature, so blond, so rosy, in her white dress beneath the white veil of her white hat: everything within him showed that the fascination of that beauty, of that candour, of that purity had subjugated him. Seated beside him, a figure of indefinable grace, there was in her eyes and smile that abandonment of fresh hearts, that abandonment which is so touching, because it is that of a heart which gives everything blindly for life and death. They pursued their gentle voyage to the

green peninsula of Sils, and only a few sentences of the deepest tenderness now and then interrupted it with alternate silences.

"You will always dress in white, Lilian?"

"If it pleases you."

And then:

"You are only twenty, dear?"

"Yes, twenty. And you are thirty-five, you told me?"

"So old, Lilian!"

"It doesn't matter: it doesn't matter!"

Again:

"Shall I see you this evening, Lilian?"

"Yes, of course."

"And to-morrow?"

"To-morrow, too."

"Always, then, Lilian? Always?"

"Always."

Theirs was a sweetness even too intense, and a languor even more overwhelming; while Lilian's eyes of periwinkle blue were far away, and a little trembling Lucio's lips. A dull grating on the ground and a rush of water where the boat had grounded at Sils: rising, they again repeated the grand word, as if in a dream.

"Always! Always!"

They went through the meadows of thick grass, along the narrow canal that unites, as it cuts a long strip of earth, the large lake of Sils with the smaller lake of Silvaplana; they walked like somnambulists immersed in a dream of fervid youth and palpitating exhilaration; they went hand in hand with rapid steps to join the two ladies who were waiting for them up there beyond the bridge; towards the large, green wood before the charming, bright houses of Sils Maria, houses all adorned with galleries, balconies, and little windows. They went with steps ever more rapid, because the very pale sun was setting in too clear a sky, and for the first time

they observed with distracted and wandering eyes the pallor of sun and sky.

Miss May Ford and Miss Clara James were seated in the outside, covered vestibule of the *Hôtel Edelweiss* which was all adorned with flowers ; they were seated at a table and were taking tea placidly and waiting. Two men were with them ; one was Massimo Granata, the Italian, one of the oldest lovers of the mountains and sojourners in the Engadine, with his face of an old child, that is rickety and ill, where above the yellowishness of the rugged skin, above the scanty, colourless beard and bony cheek-bones, only the eyes had a ray of divine goodness, while his awkward body, badly dressed in a coarse grey mountain suit, abandoned itself on a seat as if disjointed, while his knotted, shrunken hands were sorting bunches of fresh edelweiss on a table and making nosegays of them ; the other was Paul Léon, an Italian by origin, whose family must have been called Leone at Perugia, whence he came, but which had been changed into Léon after living thirty or forty years in France—Paul Léon, the French poet, much discussed and much admired for his lofty genius, his pride, and his wit, now of a cutting irony, now benevolent. At Sils Maria they found Miss May Ford, with a tender and sensible soul beneath a cold appearance, and Miss Clara James, the daughter of England's greatest spiritualist, an illustrious philosopher and poet who had died three years previously, but who was not dead to his daughter, since she spoke with him every night or believed she spoke with him, and she had remained an old maid so as to be able to have communication with the world of spirits ; Massimo Granata, who every day made long walks, had climbed the most impenetrable paths and scrambled up the steepest rocks, solely through this invincible love of his of the mountains and his loving quest of mountain flowers ; and Paul Léon, the friend of

Miss James, who despised the follies of the sojourners at St. Moritz Bad and scoffed at the cosmopolitans of the "Palace" and the "Kulm," and who in his poetic pride lodged in a little inn at Sils Maria and every day went to watch the little window where Friedrich Nietzsche had worked for fourteen springs and summers in a very modest furnished house, and in a very modest room of that house, Paul Léon who loved the country and that district where he had come for years, every year withdrawing from the advance of the ever-invading crowd from district to district in the search for solitude, who loved Massimo Granata as an ideal type of moral beauty, and admired Miss James for her noble, daughterly hallucination.

The circle grew larger when Lilian and Lucio arrived ; the greetings were sympathetic, for all knew and understood. May Ford offered tea, as was natural, to Lucio, who to please her accepted, and to Lilian, who refused sweetly. Massimo Granata offered Lilian a large nosegay of edelweiss, gathered two hours ago not far from the glacier of Fexthal, gathered with his fleshless, rickety hands that had such soft gestures, as he touched the flowers gathered after a four hours' walk to "Edelweiss-halde." Lilian pressed and immersed her rather too heated face in those delicate, glacial flowers, like stars, as if to seek there a refuge for her ardour. And scoffing, gracious, efficient Paul Léon, who had been Lucio Sabini's friend for years, incited him to fence in a dialogue and a diatribe against all the people who come to live a life *d'entrance* in a land of simplicity and peace, against the snobs who nowadays penetrated everywhere, who climbed the virgin heights and disturbed the sky and earth and waters of the Engadine. Paul Léon, a little mocking, a little serious, took Lucio Sabini, since he was fashionable, a born aristocrat, and because of the surroundings in which he lived, and as an annual

frequenter of all the great cosmopolitan meeting-places, for a representative of all that world *écaurant, dégoûtant, oui, dégoûtant—il n'y a pas d'autre mot*. To his amazement Lucio Sabini was silent and smiled, without defending that society of fictitious and real millionaires, of real Princes and Serene Highnesses, whose kingdoms are as large as kerechiefs, of false beautiful women, of false rich women—everything false, everything artificial, everything sham up there in a land of truth and purity. Lucio, as if absorbed, made no replies. At a certain point when Paul Léon cursed, with a sarcastic and refined curse, the lie of those people, whose impetuous and atrocious motto was, *Evviva La Vita*, Lucio started and replied simply :

" *Vous avez raison, mon ami.*"

Paul Léon gave a fleeting glance at Lilian Temple and smiled.

CHAPTER XII

ON the golf links that extend from the extremity of the Hôtel Kulm, climbing and descending the whole of the hill of Charnadüras, and which are so green that not even the players' feet have succeeded in making them less green, early in the afternoon the slow, strange parties of golfers kept appearing, to the wonderment of bystanders who did not understand the game, as they leaned over the little hurdles and watched with staring eyes which at last became tired and annoyed at understanding nothing. They kept appearing, to the surprise of wayfarers who stopped a moment to see a man in white shirt-sleeves or in a bright flannel waistcoat with long sleeves, advancing along the course, sometimes directly, sometimes obliquely, holding his club in his hand, stopping as he brandished it in an aimless blow, and then resuming his way, followed always by a boy who carried, by a shoulder-strap, a leather bag, which seemed like a pagan quiver ; a silent, patient boy, who regulated each step to that of the player, who crouched sometimes as he did, and finally vanished in his wake. Continuously from the green beneath the great tent of the Golf Club, where the inexpert remained to take lessons under the direction of two or three professionals, the players started whither the game and their more or less skill led them, and their rough outlines grew less and less in the far distance, till at times the links, or the horizon, became perfectly deserted, as if no players existed, as if they had been dissolved by the air or swallowed by the earth.

The spectators who had come, as if on some doubtful invitation, to see a game of golf, saw the man and woman disappear without understanding the reason, and shrugging their shoulders they departed, laughing at and mocking golfers, particularly the Germans, who laughed among themselves and with their wives ; more especially because it was an English game the Germans found it idiotic, *idiot*, as they pronounced it, when they wished to talk French. And the wayfarers, after a minute of contemplation and waiting, went again on their way, especially as they read on certain wooden posts the notice : "*Prenez garde aux balles du golf.*" Balls ? Where were the balls ? How ? The golfers, when they made a stroke, seemed to be assailing the air as if with a sudden movement of madness, and afterwards they looked like solitary vagabonds who were walking without a fixed goal, in spite of the respectful and silent companionship, at ten paces distance, of the urchin laden with the bag of clubs.

Those who played in the early afternoon were truly solitary lovers of that curious sport which obliges one to walk much in silence, in a sustained and concentrated attention, in the open country, in a peculiar search for a ball and one's opponent, in a broad horizon, neither feeling heat nor cold, exercising not only the muscles, but even a little—really a little—the intellect. They were great solitaires, who fled from society because they frequented her too much at other times of their day ; great solitaires who loved contact with the open air and fields and woods, in contrast with the confined, heavy life they were forced to lead elsewhere ; great solitaires who for a secret reason, sad, perhaps, or tragic, but secret and dissimulated, now hated man and woman ; great solitaires whose age and experience had divorced them from games of love, of vanity, and perhaps of ambition. In fact, the early golfers were the real, keen

golfers, and for the most part middle-aged men and women. Among such were the Comte de Buchner, an Austrian diplomat, a pupil of Metternich, who perceived but did not wish to confess the end of the diplomatic legend, the end of a policy made by ambassadors, a septuagenarian who already felt himself dead amongst his ancestors ; the Baron de Loewy, from London, of the powerful Loewy bank, who sometimes held in his hand the whole of European finance, a handsome, robust man with white moustaches, full of spirit, who passed hours out of doors at golf, and who came there to find equilibrium for his winter life as a great banker ; Madame Lesnoy, a woman of sixty-five, who had made her fortune thirty years ago, and though *une grande bourgeoise*, had married her sons and daughters to the greatest names in European heraldry, and who now had nothing else to do but play golf by day and bridge by night ; the Marquis de Cléan, whose wife had been killed two years ago with her lover in an hotel at Montreux, a story which tortured his life of worldly scepticism and over which he dared not feign cynicism ; the Contessa di Anagni, of the best society of Rome, who had been loved by a King and had been unable to fix the heart of the volatile sovereign ; Max and Ludwig Freytag, for whom Karl Ehbehard, the great doctor, had ordered this exercise, as being excellent to stimulate their weakened temper ; the Comtesse Fulvia Gioia, who thus even better preserved her health and mature beauty, like that of sappy, ripe fruit ; and so many others who at two and three o'clock deserted their rooms and hotels and directed themselves to the links and shortly afterwards disappeared in every direction—great solitaires, true golfers.

Towards half-past four, in the meadow which skirts the high road from the Dorf and extends beneath the terrace of the Golf Club House, in that meadow which was almost like a stage, the players increased in number,

in couples and groups, not going far away, always returning to the meadow, where at that evening hour there was a pretence of playing golf. It was a theatre whose pit was the Dorf high road with its footpath and wall, behind which people who were passing stopped to watch, whose big and little boxes were the big and little terraces of the Golf Club, where tea was taken from half-past four to six. The keen and serious players had been away for two hours and perhaps had returned. The make-believe players at tea-time represented the comedy of the game under the eyes of a hundred spectators, turning continually to the terraces, greeting and smiling at a friend and beginning with an important air to hit mightily at a golf-ball which never left the ground, because they either missed it or gave it a laughable little hit.

Not far away, in the spacious tennis-courts, where from the 18th August to the 24th the Engadine Cup was contested in the Tournament, games of tennis, singles and doubles, proceeded at every hour, from lunch-time till the evening. Truly, tennis was played everywhere, at every hour, by hundreds of enthusiasts throughout the Bad ; in front and behind the hotels, and everywhere one went, in the beautiful broad roads of the Bad, amongst the beautiful broad gardens of the Hôtel du Lac, around the "Kurhaus," around the "Victoria," appeared courts with players of both sexes, dressed in white, and the fatiguing exclamation was to be heard—"Play !" But where this passion became delirious was down below at the Tennis Tournament grounds near the "Kulm." Still, the tennis-court, like the golf links, became a theatrical scene towards half-past four in the afternoon. At that hour, on the left side of the Hôtel Kulm, the tea-tables, already set and decorated with flowers, were placed in the broad space which borders the courts. People began to climb from the Bad and to arrive from the other hotels and villas of the Dorf.

Everywhere the crowd increased ; some of the tables which had been placed together held twenty or thirty persons. The usual German element came and mingled with the great ladies and great snobs, their imitators, attired curiously, wearing rough garments and dusty boots, with a proud, mocking smile, as they talked loudly in German, and forcibly occupied the best seats, brutally turning their shoulders to the ladies, and sometimes smoking pipes. Play went on, but they were show games of young maidens who wished to be seen and admired, of women who affected the pose of sport after having tried so many poses. There were games as of a theatrical performance played by actors, if we may say so, for whom tennis was a pretext and an excuse for chatting and talking at liberty, for isolating themselves, for donning a different dress, for making acquaintances, and especially for showing themselves to all the princesses, marchionesses, ladies, and serene highnesses. That day in particular there was a game of great parade, because as Katinka Orloff, a beautiful young Russian of twenty, elegant and robust, the best player of the season, and champion of the Engadine for two years in succession, was retiring after having played a great deal in practice for the Tournament, an intermediary, an Austrian Baron, came to tell her that Her Imperial and Royal Highness, the Archduchess Maria Vittoria, desired to play with her, naturally only to learn, for she was so much weaker. Being very tired, the Russian hesitated for a moment, then she accepted.

It was a great tennis rehearsal, and the tea-tables, with their half-filled cups, were deserted by the ladies, and snobs who imitated them. A crowd gathered round to watch Maria Vittoria, who at first played slowly and cautiously, then more rapidly, her blood coursing beneath her brownish, nobly pallid cheeks, her white skirt twisting round the long slender feet, while Katinka Orloff,

dexterous but *distract*, now and then allowed herself to be beaten, resuming the lead for a moment, only to lose it again. With heightened colour and a gleam in her dark, pensive eyes, the Archduchess of Austria exerted herself amidst the complacent murmurs of admiration of the true ladies, and male and female snobs, and with a happy little cry the game ended. Politely Katinka Orloff, who knew the protocol, allowed herself to be beaten. Proud and silent the Archduchess stretched out her hand to the Orloff.

On mountains, houses, and lake, on golf links and tennis-court the grey, purple twilight descended. The white dresses of the lady players seemed to dissolve and become fantastic, and the dark clothes of the men in the distance became shadows. The terrace of the Golf Club was almost deserted, with tables overturned on every side and chairs in disorder. In a corner, separated by a group of people who were just about to depart, Mabel Clarke and Vittorio Lante were saying some subdued words. Nor were they looking at the links which they had never looked at. They troubled not about the company, which troubled not about them. They were unaware of the twilight hour, and did not observe the failing light around them. The sunset shadows descended upon the tennis-court. Players put on their heavy, dark wraps over their whites, stuffed their rackets into cases, and left, silent, tired, but content. Not far off, in the deserted square, Lucio Sabini and Lilian Temple were taking leave of each other on the return from Sils Maria, without speaking, eye to eye, and hand in hand.

CHAPTER XIII

FROM the 2nd of August the Palace Hotel, which is the supremely characteristic, fashionable, and snobbish hotel of the whole Engadine in general, and the two St. Moritzes in particular (*le Palace*, as the French said, with an accent of reverence as if they were mentioning Olympus, *the Peles*, as the English said rapidly and simply, *the Pelesh*, as the American ladies pronounced it, with rich accent), was filled with its many-souled, multiform, and original *clientèle*, and was not failing its great tradition, that of providing everybody, great or small, cause for gossiping, or mere tittle-tattle. Certainly on some days the second cause, the little one, was lacking, and on others the tittle-tattle; but, nevertheless, the tradition was maintained intact, the causes for daily gossip had scarcely ever been less than two, and each day that waned had always had its great news. Generally, when the weather was very fine, and everyone had left their rooms to sally forth in the open air, if only to descend on foot to the Bad and return by the tram, when even the soft and lazy Egyptian women, with their magnificent black eyes, pale faces, and intensely rich, though sometimes tasteful, dresses, were outside the hotel, although only at the door, making a pretence of coming and going, the daily scandal had been but one, which was born and prospered at lunch, was most robust at dinner, and flourished the rest of the evening, only to perish at night. But on the days of the 9th and 10th of August, on which it had rained, and on the 11th, on

which it had snowed slightly, when even the most intrepid pedestrians like the Comtesse Fulvia Gioia and Donna Carlotta Albano had remained at home in the hotel, when neither Madame Lawrence, nor Madame Lesnoy, nor the Marquise d'Allart had been able to play golf, when even all the men had stayed at home, to drag out the time in chatting, smoking, and playing poker, bridge, and billiards, in these three days of closure the scandals had been three new ones every day, after even those of the preceding day had been revived. 'And every day the clients of the Palace Hotel, each in their own set, when they met in the morning or later at lunch, after some vague words about health or the weather, took up at once the usual, unchangeable question and answer : "*Chère amie, connaissez vous le potin de ce matin ?*" — "*Oh, ma chère, mais je ne sais rien du tous, dites-le moi donc.*"

However, not all the women and men, old and new clients of the Palace Hotel, were gossips. Some of the women, if not many, kept decidedly aloof from all this scandalmongering, and despised it secretly. Very many of the men, through refinement of spirit and education, had the most complete indifference, even insensibility to scandal. But the serenest women who, because of the beauty of their interior life were accustomed to keep their minds free from everything trivial, allowed themselves to be taken by the slight, childish deceit which the curiosity of friend or enemy offers to women. Even the most insensible of men consented, through cold courtesy and polite condescension, to become worldly and pretend an interest in the first, second, or third scandal of the day. The Marquise di Vieuxcastel, most exquisite, of a delicate beauty, through a double elegance, moral and material, through a lively taste for art and letters, fascinating in every grace of mind and person, was not a gossip. The Comtesse Pierre de Gérard and the Baronesse

de Gourmont, two sisters, could not be gossips, both were of a classic though different beauty, both were dowered with characters full of energy and sweetness ; each of the great ladies showed pride in every expression, especially the first, the famous Comtesse Pierre, a perfect and conscious pride. The Duchesse de Langeais, for whom the care of her beauty and an amiable desire of pleasure hindered every other expression of mind, was not a gossip. Nor was the Gräfin Durckheim, the eccentric Hungarian, whose life was a romance, though completed. Nor was the Duchesse d'Armaillé, who was goodness herself. These and other ladies could not be soiled by the pitch of scandal, but involuntarily, through curiosity, through politeness, or so as not to be accused of prudishness, they listened but heard not in the presence of the really powerful scandalmongers—the Comtesse de Fleury, all beautiful without and unclean within, Frau von Friedenbach, an old lady of the Court at Berlin who had been dismissed for her political indiscretions, which, in the main, had fed the German socialistic press, the terrible old Baronesse de Tschudy, who had travelled for forty years and knew four million scandals about four thousand people she had met. Everywhere, before all the scandalmongers, these proud, quiet, frank, good women could but yield for a moment, allowing themselves to be seized for an instant by a childish and always illusive curiosity, and by a sacrifice to worldly politeness.

As for the men, who for the most part, and far more so than the women, were immune from scandalmongery, they gave way, not only because of the obligations of social life, not only so as not to be singular and to show themselves complacent, but perhaps to please certain ladies of the Palace Hotel or ladies outside, which they could not succeed in doing except by gossiping with more or less wit. It was impossible to pay court to Madame

Lawrence—the lovely professional beauty of the year—a useless court, as a matter of fact, in results, but which deceived only in its appearance, without telling her all the scandals which had been invented and were passing to and fro about her. It was impossible to see her interested or smile unless they repeated all the grotesque and perverse things which the other women had invented or were inventing about her. It was impossible to enter the circle of Madame d'Aguilar, the rich and munificent Brazilian—who every day had ten people to lunch and fifteen to dinner, had three carriages always at the disposal of her friends, and gave *cotillons*, with gifts of great value—without being mettlesome, or a witty chronicler of the rarest scandal. It was impossible to accompany on a walk the little Marquise d'Allart, pale and pink like fragile Dresden china, but greedy and hungry and thirsty for *potins*. She would exclaim peevishly : “ *Mais n'en savez vous pas un d'inédit, de potin ? Rien que les vieux, les usés ? Allons, cherchez, cherchez !* ” Giorgio Galanti, an Italian gentleman from Bologna, whose wit was as fine as a hair, very quick, a fascinating *conteur*, had found a method, the secret of which he offered to those who had no other, of conquering the feminine spirit. He used to go day and night outside the “ Palace,” into the other hotels of the Dorf and Bad, wherever he had discovered a beautiful woman or a pretty girl, and after a conversation on vague subjects, he would say : “ *Madame, connaissez vous le dernier potin du ' Palace ' ? Il est épalant, je vous assure.* ” The effect was certain. Immediately seized by curiosity, tickled in her latent snobbishness, wishing to know all the little mysteries of Olympus—the “ Palace ”—the lady from the Grand Hotel, the “ Schweizerhof,” the Hôtel du Lac, the “ Victoria,” would turn her beautiful eyes to Giorgio Galanti, which told him that not only were they questioning him, but were promising him the reward of indiscretion.

But if the tittle-tattle—first, second, and third class—of every day of the extremely *chic* society of the "Palace" was sometimes vulgar or frankly cruel in substance, it was always light, witty, graceful, and diverting in form. The most terrible things, true or fairly true, were said with such a *brio*, such ingenuousness, and often with such profound humour, that not only did they cause no horror, but they even caused the whitest and tenderest souls to smile. The ineffable, invincible, inimitable French language lent itself for this purpose, that language in which everything is rounded, garlanded, and shines. It is true that Paul Fry, the Bohemian, was a player of extraordinary strength and fortune at every game, who always tried to play with millionaires and millionairesses; but the great *potin*, with which Giorgio Galanti attracted the most Catholic and snobbish Spaniard, Donna Mercédès de Fuentes, was when Fry, bold and cool, began to play with Signora Azquierda, an immensely rich Argentinian, who lived at Paris, and having tried conclusions with her, she won from him three thousand francs at poker—she, the woman, from him, Paul Fry, the invincible! Was not this *potin* told attractively, delicious in its perversity? Then there was another scandal, that about Lady Hermione Crozes, the Englishwoman divorced from Lord Crozes, tall, thin, ruddy of countenance, with dazzling eyes, who disappeared directly after lunch and dinner, and whom everyone believed to have shut herself up in her room to receive a lover, till at last it was discovered that she went to drink all alone twice a day, consuming the most terrible mixtures, and her maids had to help her in her furies, or take care of her like a baby in her torpors that seemed like death. Said with good grace, did not this atrocious happening lose all its atrocity? Another scandal which lasted more than a day, a most important one, concerned Frau van der Claes, a Hamburg lady, who had a poor lover and a son

of twenty, both of whom had cost her much money, and how one day Frau van der Claes, when Lina Cavalieri had arrived at the Hôtel du Lac, had seen her son, which did not matter, and her lover, which was a serious business, fall head over ears in love with the beautiful Italian singer, and her mad anger and the money she squandered on her son to make him a rival to her lover so that he might miss the goal and return to her, and the useless courting of the Cavalieri by son and lover—this intensely complicated scandal, how well it circulated, how sketchy in its disgusting particulars, how graceful in its brutal circumstances !

About Annie Clarke and her daughter Mabel, during their sojourn there of three weeks, there had been at least ten large scandals and twenty little ones. Their milliard, their eight hundred, or hundred, or hundred and fifty, or fifty, or thirty millions had formed an accidental variation to the scandals, and the birth and life of the very placid Mrs. Annie Clarke, so like a dumb and patient idol, had been time after time related in bizarre terms, telling how she had been an opera singer, or a nurse, or the daughter of a shepherd in the Far West, or an Italian foundling, and finally the widow of another millionaire, whom Mr. Clarke, on losing his wife, had ruined and forced to commit suicide. ♦

And what an amount of *potins*, inside and outside the hotel, about the excellent Mr. Clarke, who remained on the other side of the ocean, in his palace on Fifth Avenue, and every two days sent a cablegram to his ladies, to tell them he was well and that all was well, and every two days received a very short telegram in reply—which simplified correspondence. What *potins* of the first order about Mr. Clarke, who was declared to be enormously rich or stupidly poor, an undeserving thief or a philanthropist, a king of rubber, an emperor of gutta-percha, a father eternal of aluminium for cooking utensils ! What

little *potins* every evening about the solitary jewel of the day of Mrs. Clarke—the pearl collar, the emerald pin, the ruby ring, the diadem of diamonds ; and all of them enormous, colossal—pearls, emeralds, ruby, sapphire, diamond. What *potins* these were, and the principal *potin* of all that these jewels, too unique, too enormous, too colossal, were perfectly imitated from the real, that they were false : “ *Oui, ma chère, du toc, pas autre chose ; du toc splendide, mais du toc !* ” And about Mabel Clarke, —so beautiful, so full of every grace, so amiable, so frank, the image and symbol of a race vibrant with youth, the image and symbol of a new femininity, different and differently graced and attractive—what a daily exercise of scandalmongers, whom her simplicity and loyalty did not succeed in disarming, created especially by mothers blessed with daughters ; and how her virtue and her dowry suffered tremendous oscillations from one day to another. She was very rich, richer than Anna Gould or Gladys Vanderbilt ; she was poorest of the poor ; she had refused the Duke of Sairmeuse, because she wished to be a Serene Highness ; she had had an intrigue with a tenor of the Manhattan theatre ; she had been engaged to a son of a king of tinned goods ; she was a cold flirt ; she adored Italy, and would have married even a dandy of Lucca ; she had been converted to Catholicism ; she was making a fool of Vittorio Lante ; she loved him. All this kept increasing towards the decline of the season, the more so as all the other *potins* had been consumed and some were threadbare ; the more so as the now open love of Vittorio and Mabel exasperated so many people—hunters after dowries for silent, sad daughters who never found a husband, mothers of eligible young men—all were annoyed at another's fortune, another's love, another's happiness. On the evening of the great *cotillon de bienfaisance* at the Palace Hotel, with tickets at twenty francs, the night of the 25th of August, the last

great ball at the "Palace," the *chic* night of *chic* nights, the love-making, engagement, and marriage of Mabel Clarke and Vittorio Lante, the no love, no engagement, the no marriage, were the greatest and most multiform source of gossip of the day, evening, and night.

CHAPTER XIV

UNFAILINGLY every lady who entered, in all the splendour of her ball dress, stopped a moment at the threshold of the hall of the Palace Hotel, to give a glance at the hall, which is divided into two or three parts, curiously divided and united, where the fortunate inhabitants of this Olympus of the Engadine were standing, sitting, or walking about in pairs or groups. And by the lady's rapid and indicative glance, which embraced the spectacle, she was at once recognised as initiated or profane. The initiated was the lady of other hotels of the Bad or Dorf who, by her rank and habits, was constantly in touch with the Olympus of the "Palace," who often came there to dinner and took part in all the balls ; she was the great lady living in a sumptuous private villa with her family, retinue, and carriages, and hence she was not only initiated, but was a goddess of an Olympus more Olympian than the "Palace," if it is possible to imagine it. The initiated halted a moment to look, at the threshold of the hall, merely to search with her eye for an especial friend ; and she, if there, would come towards her with a rustling of silk, with a shining of sequins and diamonds, and would take the initiated away with her to a corner at the back to chat, as they waited for the ball.

But in the glance of the profane, at the threshold of the sacred vestibule, which they had seldom crossed in the daytime or never, and who were certainly crossing it for the first time at night, everything was to be seen : uncertainty, curiosity, vanity, humility, embarrassment, fastidiousness, and perhaps even a slight feeling of pain.

The more vainly audacious of the profane adored and hated the "Palace" from afar, and they were dying to go there to mix with those Olympian surroundings, yet none of them ever succeeded in being invited there; so they pretended not to mind and spoke badly of the "Palace," though they would have walked on their knees to enter and remain there on one or all of the guest nights. Other profane were anxious to gain an intimate knowledge of an atmosphere famous for its refined luxury, for its exquisite pleasures, for a sense of exclusiveness, and secretly tormented by curiosity and desires beyond their station, had eagerly waited the chance of living there for one evening only, even as intruders. Some other profane living at St. Moritz apart from great festivities, meetings, and amusements, wishing for one night to show the rich dress they had never put on, and the hair tiring they had never tried, wishing for one evening not to be bored, had firmly believed in satisfying this complex desire of theirs by passing an enchanting evening at the "Palace." And since for twenty francs one could reach this lofty, closed Olympus, since for only twenty francs one could enter this terrestrial paradise, all the profane—the vain, the covetous, the dreamers, the curious, the bored—had been preparing themselves for a week for this supreme approach, had been agitated about their dress, their hair tire, their cloak, their carriage, and their escort. In appearance they were happily agitated, but secretly they were pre-occupied about cutting a poor figure in some way, and they pretended ease, distraction, simplicity, as if from time immemorial they had been frequenters of the "Palace." But the moment they penetrated the first vestibule of the temple dedicated to the god "Snob," in that temple which seemed to bear written, in its shining lights, in the superb wealth spread around, in the powerful luxury of its atmosphere and its people, the prophetic

and violent motto of an ardent and feverish society :
" EVVIVA LA VITA ! "

When these profane, these intruders, entered there, all their emotion, all their fervour, in the long glance, changed into doubt, regret, and pain, and they would almost have turned back, as if they felt themselves profane, more than ever and eternally profane. However, hesitation, contrition, and pain were but for a moment : with the deep, civil courage of which women give a hundred proofs every day, of which no one is aware, though often it reaches to heroism ; with an act of resolution and valour, with feigned indifference and ingenuousness, the profane entered and advanced, as if they were initiated. No one came forward to meet them ; they knew not where to direct themselves, whether to right or left or to the rear ; but followed resolutely by their husbands and brothers, they went and sat down in some place, fanning themselves or playing with their shawls, tranquil in appearance, as if they were of the house, as if they had lived for years at the " Palace."

Soon the profane were in every corner ; and if their number increased, their worldly condition at that festival was not bettered. No one knew them there, they knew no one—they remained isolated. After chatting a little with a husband or brother or son who accompanied them, appearing to smile and joke, to be interested and amused, they became silent and discouraged. They watched with badly concealed anxiety the elegant crowd that surrounded them, that was seated or grouped together or divided, as it greeted each other or chatted livelily ; the poor profane watched to discover a face they knew of man or woman, to exchange, if not a word, a greeting, a smile, a nod with a human being of that crowd, and, disconsolate, finding none, they lowered their eyes upon the figures of their Louis XVI fans. Still more deeply irritated were the profane who by chance

knew someone at the "Palace." The loud, presumptuous, very wealthy Frau Mentzel came from the Stahlbad, and as she held a privileged court there, she had succeeded sometimes, merely by chance, in having at her luncheons, her *gouters*, and her dinners some gentleman of the "Palace" itself, or some initiated of the "Badrutt," of the Grand Hotel, the Château, the villas, on days in which one of these gentlemen had absolutely nothing better to do ; this Frau Mentzel was absolutely scandalised because among the three or four of those she knew one had greeted her, saying two words, and had turned on his heels ; another had merely bowed to her without speaking ; another had not seen her ; and the last had openly pretended not to have seen her. Covered with jewels, in a sumptuous Parisian toilette, with an enormous feather in her hair, she did nothing but grind her teeth, chewing curses against the four *lâcheurs*, while her husband and her two *cavalieri serventi*, two colourless and humble parasites, listened terrified and silent, as they bowed their heads servilely.

As for Donna Mercédès de Fuentes, profane of the profane, who looked very beautiful in a white satin dress trimmed with silver, who was always beautiful, in spite of too much rouge, bistre, and pearl powder, with which she spoiled her brown, Spanish face, she had seen three or four faces pass before her ; and among them her Italian friend, Don Giorgio Galanti. Every time the perfidious Italian gave his arm to a different lady and only once had he directed at Donna Mercédès a greeting and a distinctly cold smile. And she had hoped to be led round in triumph by him through the *salons* of the "Palace" ; she had dared to hope to dance the *cotillon* with him. Deluded and deeply snubbed, she had not even the strength to quarrel in Spanish with her poor husband ; her beautiful black eyes, which were too much underlined with bistre, filled with tears.

As if they wished to show even more markedly the distance that separated them from the profane, matrons and maids and gentlemen of all ages treated each other with such domesticity, with such familiarity, that they seemed to be the closest relations, the most intimate and inseparable friends. The women particularly *tutoied* each other ; many men and women called each other by name. French diminutives and English endearments were to be heard and strange nicknames. One greeted Fanchette, another excused the absence of Bob, one gave news of Dorine, another asked after Gladys or spoke of Bibi's illness. In that society it seemed as if no one any longer had a surname or title ; all seemed brothers, cousins, husbands, lovers of one race and caste, of a single country and house. Whatever did the wretched, profane intruders know about those names, endearments, and nicknames, whoever they were, wherever they came from, whatever they did ; if Bibi were a man or woman, or if Gladys were young or old ? However could the profane intruders understand those conversations in French, English, or German, conversations which seemed to be carried on in a special and incomprehensible, aristocratic jargon, full of sub-understandings, references to people unknown to them, allusions to events they knew nothing of ; however could they understand that chaff full of completely conventional wit, whose formula escaped them ? What could they see in the malicious smiles, in the little sceptical bursts of laughter ? What could they grasp of the subdued, half-uttered phrases said with a sneer—a regular cryptic language, let us say ? How could they imagine from a word thrown into the ear an assignment, a refusal, a consent, a warning, a malignity, a trouble, a scandal especially ; words underlined by a fleeting but expressive glance, by a rapid but suggestive squeeze of the hand ? Ought not the profane intruders to be astonished, stupefied, almost oppressed

by all this, while the curious, alluring spectacle was augmenting their wonderment and secret pain ?

A curious, most curious, yet alluring spectacle ! Not one of the ladies of the " Palace " or of the initiated resembled each other ; not one was dressed alike ; there was not one whose jewels resembled another's ; not one whose beauty was equal to another's ; not one whose ugliness was similar to another's ugliness. All were truly Olympian, by an almost mysterious sign that made them seem of one race and caste, of but one country and family. But beyond this indefinite sign, each preserved a personal character in face, dress, features, and gestures. And all these women seemed to be detached from a background even more phantasmagorical, of exquisite Frenchwomen, who caused the flowing lines of their Parisian dresses to undulate gently from their hips, amidst light lace and soft silk, purposely brought from the great *ateliers* of the Rue de la Paix for balls at the " Palace "—*le Palace, ma chère, vous pensez*—detached from a background of Austrian ladies, with rich and graceful dresses, certainly beautiful, but rather more pleasing than beautiful ; separated by a background of Egyptians, Greeks, Roumanians, Argentines, Spaniards, who owed it to their immense fortunes, their natural, humble sweetness of temperament, that they were enabled to be introduced and placed in the Olympus of the " Palace " ; detached from a background of Italian women, majestic and grave, or pretty and witty—each figure, amidst those more prominent and those more in the shade, with her own character and own life forming a curious, singular, and alluring spectacle. The profane intruders, with dazzled eyes and bewildered glance, went from one to another of these feminine figures and now and then, tired of wondering, they lowered their glance, a little pale, before a world of such varied appearances, multi-form and dissimilar, a world from which every moment

they felt themselves separated for ever: they raised their eyes, ever less anxiously, ever more fatigued, for some new, wondrous apparition.

At last, amidst the murmurs of the whole crowd, appeared, late as usual, the famous Miss Miriam Jenkyns, a divine girl—*ah, elle est vraiment divine, ma chère*—with whom already ten to thirty celebrated personages were in love, and numerous unknown personages. Amongst the illustrious were an hereditary prince of a powerful empire, an Indian Maharajah, a grandee of Spain, a celebrated scientist, a renowned painter and father of sons; but Miss Jenkyns loved none of them, and instead, contented herself with her unrestrained desire of conquest, being now a Europeanised American girl, full of the deepest scepticism. Nevertheless, as she came from Pontresina she appeared one of the last, desired and invoked especially by those who had never seen her. She appeared in a wilful simplicity, dressed in a tunic of white wool, like the "Primavera" of Sandro Botticelli, adorned with a branch of flowers which crossed the skirt right to its hem, with hair knotted a little loosely as in the picture of the great Tuscan, and covered with loose flowers, with a white tulle shawl, like a cloud, on her shoulders and arms. Her natural beauty had been recomposed and transformed by her according to the purest pre-Raphaelite type, and it was very difficult to discover the subtle and minute art of the recomposition and transformation. There was another great murmuring, one of the last, when the Princess of Leiningen entered, an Armenian who, in the strangest circumstances, had married a German mediatised prince, a military prince, whose appearances were rare. Not very tall of stature, in fact rather small, but moulded to perfection, with little hands and feet, the Princess of Leiningen comprised within herself the poetic legends of Armenian beauty. Beneath a mass of black,

shining hair, her forehead was white and short, her two immense black eyes were shining like jewels ; she had a pure, oval face, very white, on which the long eyelashes cast a slight shadow, touched up by the inevitable but pretty *maquillage* of Eastern women, with rather a crimson rouge on the cheeks and the lobes of the ears, a slightly violet shade beneath the eyes, some black, the better to arch the subtle eyebrows, and a little of the rather crimson rouge on the lips. She was dressed completely in black, and since she was so white she seemed to rise from a background of shadow ; an immense hat of black tulle strangely framed her white face and splendid eyes. She always wore an immense hat, black or white, even with her *décolleté* dresses, and she never danced. She crossed the room with her light little feet, shod in white satin, without looking at anyone—a dream creature, unreal as one of Edgar Allan Poe's characters, unreal as a vision in an hallucination. She remained at the back of the *salon* silent beneath the shadow of her black hat and black dress, completely white with her unreal countenance.

At this last strange appearance the profane felt their impressions to be founded and they settled themselves into two different parties. The one, proud and impertinent, like Frau Mentzel, openly hated the surroundings they had wished to penetrate and began to vent their anger and their humiliation, finding all the matrons and maids of the " Palace," who were unaware of their existence, ugly, awkward, indecent, shameless, venting their anger on their husbands and followers who, poor people, through cowardice agreed, though they were frightened at heart lest these vituperations should be heard, as they looked around them carefully in fear of a scandal. The other party, true snobs, blind and deaf adorers of that surrounding, venerated it even more deeply, felt themselves even more humiliated, and oppressed, bewailing

even more their own anonymity, nullity, and lack of existence. They felt they deserved to be anonymous there and non-existing for ever : they understood that they had no right, that they never would have any right to belong to that superior, unarrivable, sublime humanity that lived at the " Palace " !

The which superior, unreachable, sublime humanity, while it aroused such vain disdain, such empty proposals of revenge, such sterile lamentation among the wretched profane, was troubling itself with nothing else at that lively and intense hour of the ball but with that deep and supreme feminine interest—to see, observe, study, value, and put a figure on the jewels of the other women in the ballroom. To note, analyse, and value these jewels and compare them with their own ; at times to smile in triumph, or enviously, or really bitterly, according as their own jewels succeeded in being superior, equal, inferior, or very inferior to the others. Their eyes seemed not to rest on the pearl necklaces, on the *rivières* of diamonds, the diadems of pearls and diamonds, the emerald solitaires, and the ruby sprays. Their glance was fleeting, their lips offered other words, but the women did nothing but mentally make rapid calculations, after which they smiled carelessly, or suddenly sighed, or were unexpectedly disturbed. For on that summer night in the high mountains, in a landscape of the purest beauty, amid proud peaks so close to the stars, amid eternal glaciers that told an austere and terrible tale, in that room there were collected, in the shape of jewels, the fortune perhaps of a populace. At the splendour of thousands and thousands of gems, at the scintillations of those thousands of precious stones, in the presence of all that bewildering brilliance, women's beauty, girls' grace, and richness of apparel were concentrated into a furnace of light, lost their value, and were completely eclipsed. Each woman's hair, neck, bosom, and arms were so

thickly crowded with pearls and diamonds, sapphires and emeralds, while the jewels of some were few, but enormous, that nothing took the eye or mind, at once astonishing and frightening, but that mad, frenzied luxury up there in the high mountains, in the still summer night, not far from the whiteness of the peaks profiled against the sky. But suddenly even that madness and frenzy seemed conquered, and in spite of the studied reserve of all those women, and in spite of the studied indifference of the men, a word passed from group to group, from room to room, murmured a hundred times, softly or loudly :

" The tiara ! The tiara ! "

Mrs. Annie Clarke appeared in the hall, coming from her apartments, although her daughter had been dancing for an hour, having for her partner in the *cotillon* Don Vittorio Lante della Scala. Being lazy, Annie Clarke always arrived late, or perhaps she did so purposely. That evening she was wearing a rather dark dress of purple velvet, trimmed with quite simple lace ; from neck and bosom descended a *rivière* of diamonds, which were very large at the neck, and afterwards became less large, in long streams of small, shining diamonds, like streams of running water, falling to the waist, whence neck, bosom, and corsage assumed a luminous, strange appearance. But what was astounding in Annie Clarke that evening, what had never been seen before, was her diamond tiara. It was not a single diadem of large diamonds, but three diadems, one above the other, in flowers, and leaves, and Arabic work and points. It was a veritable little tower of diamonds, perched on a suitable coiffure. It was a tiara that bizarrely resembled those of the High Priests of Buddha in Indian temples, a tiara that strangely resembled the jewelled triple crown of the Pope of the whole Catholic world. It was the tiara of all the great American ladies, the famous tiara of the

house of Clarke, like a lighthouse or like the torch which Bartholdi's "Liberty" holds aloft over the port of Brooklyn, to show navigators the entrance to New York. As Annie Clarke crossed the length of the hall quietly and indifferently to pay her respects to Her Serene Highness, the Grand Duchess of Salm-Salm, this Clarke tiara, beacon and torch of America, eclipsed, annulled, destroyed—a unique, inimitable jewel—all the other jewels of the women who were gathered there. After a great silence of wonderment amongst the throng, of groups near and far, after a silence of stupor, spite, annoyance, envy, anger, and sadness ; after some instants of these atrocious, seething sentiments of every kind, a chattering began and spread everywhere about the tiara and against it, about Mabel's marriage and against it.

"*Puis-je me congratuler pour les fiançailles de votre chère fille ?*" the Grand Duchess politely asked Annie Clarke.

As she bowed, the tiara threw a stream of light around. Beneath her tiara Annie Clarke smiled, bowed, and expressed her thanks.

Of the hundred and twenty ladies who were present at the "Palace" festivities that evening but eighty, perhaps, were seated round the ballroom for the charity cotillon ; and among the eighty only thirty were dancing. Thus even in this that reputation for theatricalism and parade, which everything assumed in the "Palace" Olympus, was maintained : that reputation was maintained, so that there was always a spectacle and a public which at times changed sides, passing from the stage to the stalls, and vice versa. There were not many couples, then, to dance in the long and undulating whirls of the "Boston," in the rapid if rarer twirls of the waltz—so much the fashion now the "Boston," so out of fashion the waltz ! There were not many couples, hence those

who danced had plenty of room in which to turn round, now languidly, now more resolutely, in the difficult modern art of the "Boston." There was no bumping of each other; trains gyrated in their silken softness without being trod upon; voile and tulle skirts seemed like revolving clouds. Thus the dancers could display all their mastery of the dance if they possessed it, and those who did not possess it dared not expose themselves on the stage, since all around the curious, attentive public followed such a dance spectacle as if they were at the theatre; observing, criticising, approving, and scoffing. On that stage there were some of the dancers of the first flight: the slender Principessa di Castelforte in her white dress and with her string of pearls, worth half a million; another Italian, the Marchesa di Althan, a reed of a woman with an attractive, ugly face; Signorina de Aguilar, a Brazilian, dressed in red, with a vigour quite Spanish, dancing like a lost soul, like an insatiable flame. Madame Lawrence danced like a Grecian bas-relief; Miss Mabel Clarke with perfect harmony, in the grace and ardour of the dance; Miss Miriam Jénkyns glided as if she were a shadow or a nymph on the meadows. And there were other celebrated dancers, celebrated in all cosmopolitan *salons*, at Biarritz, at Nice, and at Cairo.

In the first flight among the men were Count Buchner, the diplomat, who had danced in all the capitals of the world for thirty years on end, and at sixty, dried and withered as he was, was still a beautiful dancer; the beau of beaux, the Hungarian, the Comte de Hencke, the famous dancer of the *majourka* to the music of Liszt; Don Vittorio Lante della Scala, one of the most graceful and vigorous dancers of Italy; the young Comte de Roy, the little Frenchman; Edward Crozes, the twenty-year-old son of Lady Crozes. People came and went from the hall, the saloon, and other rooms, and the audience at the

performance changed and was renewed around the famous dancers. The performance continued, each performing his or her part with artistic zeal, amidst the approval or adverse criticisms of the audience. In a dress of tenderest pink *crêpe*, surrounded by a silver girdle, with a small wreath of little roses around her riotous chestnut hair, Mabel Clarke, one of the chief characters of this worldly comedy, was dancing the beginning of the *cotillon* with another of the chief dancers, Vittorio Lante della Scala ; but seized by the truth and the force of their feelings, they forgot to be actors. They had no thought of pleasing others, of being admired by others. They forgot altogether their surroundings, with their artifices and pretences and obligatory masks ; and only the perfect, tranquil joy of being together held them in its beautiful frankness, of not leaving each other, of being able to let themselves go to the rhythm of the music in harmonious turns, where they seemed to depart and vanish afar in a dream of well-being led on by the languid murmur of the music. In their sentimental absorption they seemed even more to suit each other, and the public of the boxes and stalls around them wondered at them, then with a sneer the fashionable gossiping, calumny, and back-biting began again, subduedly.

" . . . Lante has hit it off."

" . . . The girl has lost her head."

" . . . Of course, he has done his best to compromise her."

" . . . In any case, he won't be the first."

" . . . St. Moritz is a great marriage mart."

" . . . There are plenty of men, too."

Every now and then the music was silent, and the dancers promenaded arm in arm or sat down for a moment, the girls with their hands full of flowers and their figures crossed with ribbons of brilliant colours, the

cotillon gifts. Then matron and maid would approach Mabel and Vittorio with a smile of satisfaction on their lips, asking in French, in English, in German :

" May I congratulate you ? "

The American girl's beautiful head, crowned with roses, said " yes " with a gracious, frank bow. Vittorio Lante, unable to control himself, for a moment paled with joy, and twisted his yellow moustaches nervously. The friend would be profuse in her compliments.

" *Merci, chère, merci,*" exclaimed Mabel Clarke frankly, in her limpid voice.

" Oh, thanks ! " scarcely murmured Vittorio Lante.

Once alone, they looked at each other, enjoying those delicious moments intensely. Then, without speaking, in simultaneous action, they joined in the dance again, between the Countess of Durckheim, the Hungarian, a charming eccentric, and Beau de Hencke, who astonished the room, or they danced between the Comte de Roy and Miriam Jenkyns, who danced as if in one of Corot's pictures. Then the friend, maid or matron would rejoin her own set. With spiteful glances, correctly veiled, with slighting words and unfinished phrase, the chorus about Mabel Clarke began again :

" . . . Oh, these American girls, all the world is theirs. It is disgusting."

" . . . These American girls pretend to be strong, and as soon as they see an Italian's moustaches they fall."

" . . . These American girls ; their dowry is always a story, a fable, a romance."

" . . . Dowry ? A settlement, and uncertain, too."

" . . . Papa Clarke may go under."

" . . . He has gone under three times."

" . . . Mabel's dear papa is a faker of pig's flesh."

" . . . The mother is silly and vain. Poor Vittorio, what a father and mother-in-law ! "

In a dance that became ever more lively, the first and

second parts of that theatrical spectacle passed—the "Palace" *cotillon*. A more precipitous movement led the couples amidst gauze, tulle, ribbons, paper caps, streamers of fresh flowers, and Swiss bells of silver paper.

Now and then, during a moment's pause, a friend stopped beside Mabel and Vittorio, formulated a courteous inquiry, bowed at the reply, and offered his congratulations, seemingly complimentary and full of worldly good-nature. The orchestra gave forth its fervid recall; the couples danced anew in a hurried whirl. The friend would withdraw to form the centre of a group of men, old, middle-aged, and young, to whom he brought the news, and where the worldly, masculine choir, with disingenuous air, with an air as if it did not matter, occupied itself particularly with Vittorio Lante.

" . . . He hasn't a farthing."

" . . . Seven hundred thousand francs' worth of debts."

" . . . Refused five times by five girls."

" . . . His mother mends silk stockings to get a living."

" . . . He can't pay his hotel bill."

" . . . Oh, now his creditors will wait."

" . . . Is it true that he paid his attentions to the mother? "

" . . . He hasn't a title. The real princes are the others, the Della Rovere."

" . . . He can buy it back; it is there in the family. He has only to pay well for it."

" . . . He can do that now."

" . . . It seems that the girl has already given him money. It is the custom in America."

More gaily, naturally, and simply towards its close, the *cotillon* gathered together all the couples in the room. By now all the actors had forgotten parade and performance, and were merely abandoning themselves to the great

and intoxicating pleasure of living. The *cotillon* ended, because all wished to go to supper, to the extremely dainty, exquisite supper which, in an extremely new *chic* aspect, closes every special night at the "Palace." In two or three rooms the tables were ready. The company was chosen carefully, sympathetic and antipathetic were again carefully expressed, with bizarre reunions and cruel exclusions. In the ballroom the final picture still kept the crowd. Upon two little chariots, drawn by hand, appeared two great piles of green branches and wild flowers, tied with ribbons. Drawn joyfully into the middle of the room, the bundles were opened, revealing in the one Miriam Jenkyns, in the other Mabel Clarke, the two leaders of the *cotillon*. The greatest applause greeted this final picture, and while the pair led the final gallion there were still some discreet exclamations directed at Mabel and Vittorio :

" *Vive les fiancés !* "

Blushing in her pink dress as she left the room on Vittorio Lante's arm, Mabel Clarke passed into the hall, to look for her mother to sup at the great Clarke table. And now everyone surrounded her, to congratulate her and Vittorio, and both, happy and composed, returned thanks. A few moments afterwards all were seated at table. At a table for men only, amidst young and old, all more or less dowry-hunters, their less happy and less fortunate chief, the Vicomte de Lynen, was telling in a low voice, between the *langouste à la Colbert* and the *chaufroid de gibier*, how three years ago Vittorio Lante had seduced a poor cousin of his house, how she had had a baby by him, how he had deserted mother and little daughter, and how the mother had threatened to *vitrioler l'Américaine*.

CHAPTER XV

AGAIN, on the 23rd of August, the whole Engadine was encompassed and surrounded by rain, not one of those rough, short showers of the high mountains, which pass from valley to valley like a seething whirlwind, and leave the sky cleansed and serene where they have passed, while the sky they overtake becomes cloudy and obscured ; but it was a soft, close, continuous, almost tireless rain. The rain fell upon the ground indefatigably, and impregnated it with profound damp and pungent freshness ; it fell on the waters of the lake, from the great lake of Sils to the melancholy little lake of Statz, imprinting on them thousands of little circles, thousands of little ripples ; it fell upon the leaves of the trees, the meadow grass, the last flowers of the Alpine summer, and leaves and grass became lucid with a new and intense green, and the flowers became brighter. It fell on roofs and verandahs, on villages and countryside, and cleaned and clothed them with a bright mist, renovating the air and ever purifying it. At windows and balconies, at the glass doors of the hotel vestibules, on that rainy morning there waited for some time all those who in the Engadine go out every morning, sooner or later, many longing for the fresh, free air, many for amusements and diversion, while others were sighing for the usual meetings, of accident or design, for adventures begun or about to begin. Each as he watched the sky and the horizon waited for the rain to tire, diminish, and cease ; but the rain seemed even more regular and tranquil, as it fell methodically and monotonously in an immense veil of light grey that held the whole Engadine.

Then men, women, and children who were unwilling to renounce the open air, their distractions and meetings, gradually vanished from window, balcony, and the glass doors of vestibules, and by degrees the roads of St. Moritz Bad, which had been deserted for one or two hours, began to be filled with people sallying forth from the hotels, *dépendances*, *pensions*, and villas, who descended on tram and foot from St. Moritz Dorf to the Bad in search of life, movement, and people. But beneath the fine downpour, and through the continuous silvery drops, people were of another colour and assumed other lines. All the white dresses of the women were changed to black, dark grey, and blue, and all the white, transparent blouses had vanished, or were hidden beneath woollen jackets, closely buttoned at the bosom, with collars raised; and skirts were shorter than ever, showing the feet to the calf, shod in strong boots with short nails. In place of white, blue, or pink veils, that formed a cloud round hats and faces, were substituted dark veils which surrounded hat and face tightly. All the variegated summer suits of the men had vanished, with straw and panama hats, and all were dressed gloomily in black overcoats; the Germans especially had drawn on their ulsters, cut as it were with an axe, like the side of a chest of drawers, with a belt behind held fast by a huge button. But beneath the incessant rain all seemed another people, with other faces and bodies, with other gestures and movements. Alf went with rapid steps, without stopping, along the beautiful clear roads of the Bad, amidst the gardens full of trees and the public park, only slowing their steps beneath the famous porticoes of the Bad. Nearly all came and went to and from the great wooden *promenoir*, where is the *Serpent-quelle*, a new spring, to and from the *galérie de bois*, which is the meeting-place of meeting-places when it does not rain—but there is no promenading when it rains—while

in the background the orchestra plays the more passionate airs from *Carmen*, and the more penetrating from *Manon*, and on the other side the ladies pretend to drink the waters while they walk up and down and flirt. That morning the *promenoir* is all humid with the rain, and there is a light vapour and steam in the air ; but the meetings, the distractions, adventures even, beneath the rain, developed themselves, while the notes of *Aida* caused Italian hearts to beat.

In the afternoon, as the rain continued, a different way of using the time was organised. In the vestibule of the Hôtel du Lac was hung a notice, on which was written "*Kinderballet*," that is to say, a children's dance, the celebrated, pretty dance for children which takes place at that hotel on a wet day. At the "*Stahlbad*" Frau Mentzel invited, through the telephone, fifty people to tea, when in the *salon* there were already fifty people belonging to the same hotel. At St. Moritz Dorf, at the "*Palace*," twenty bridge tables were set, instead of the usual eight ; at the "*Kulm*" a billiard match was started. Everywhere ping-pong tables were set up for boys and girls, everywhere the reading-rooms overflowed with people, and as an exception each took tea in his own hotel. Towards six the rain began to diminish, at half-past six it rained no more ; so nearly all the men went forth for a quarter of an hour or five minutes for a breather, as they said, or to buy a paper and flowers. All breathed a very fresh air, and he who tarried found it very cold. At eight in the evening in all the hotels, as the ladies came down to dinner in low dresses, the large fire-places had been lit ; on entering their rooms at midnight they found their fires lit, and the stoves roaring with heat. The thermometer had descended rapidly to one degree below zero. Next morning the whole Engadine was covered with snow ; it had snowed for five or six hours during the night.

As from his windows he watched the landscape become white with a wintry aspect, but without any of the cruel sadness of a winter-day, with a slight whiteness in which he perceived grass and earth, with a whiteness almost ready to melt and vanish, Lucio Sabini moved impatiently. He opened the windows to see better, and leant out. He perceived that on the roads the snow had already vanished, but that the woods and meadows were still covered with it, and that the mountains around were covered with snow right to their base.

"But the roads are free," he said to himself, striving to conquer his impatience.

Impatience, uncertainty, and irritation disturbed him, as he dressed rapidly, glancing now and then at his watch. During the night he had slept little and badly, owing to a dull restlessness which he attributed to the idea of having to rise early that morning for the excursion with Lilian Temple and Miss May Ford to the Bernina Pass. He had slept little and badly, perhaps because his heart, nerves, and senses were overflowing with life, in a fullness that was sometimes too tumultuous, which he strove in vain to repress and hide. In the presence of the snow that had rendered white and cold all the landscape of mountains and woods, of meadows and houses, the fear lest that expected, desired, invoked excursion, that excursion which was perhaps to be the most beautiful and exalted of that month of love, could no longer take place, suddenly conquered him and bore him down, like a child who has had what he most desired snatched away from him.

"They will not go," he said to himself, as he finished dressing.

And the day that was a mistake and a failure oppressed him with the weight of a mortal sadness. The carriage which was to take them to the Bernina Pass ought already to be in front of the "Kulm," according to the

instructions he had given the driver. Already he should have walked the short stretch from his "Caspar Badrutt" to the "Kulm." But with all the snow on the mountains and the woods and meadows perhaps even the coachman had considered the excursion postponed.

"Postponed—till when? The month is ending," thought Lucio Sabini to himself bitterly.

At eight in the morning it was very silent at his hotel; most of the early risers, perhaps, having seen the snow, had remained in bed. He went into the long corridor, where at the end was the telephone; he asked for and obtained communication with the Hôtel Kulm, and begged that they would ask if the Misses Temple and Ford still decided to go to the Bernina. He waited at the telephone, pale, with his eyes a little swollen from want of sleep, chewing the end of a cigarette which had gone out. Suddenly the "Kulm" telephone rang, and told him that Miss Temple was at the telephone. He strove to restrain himself, and said quietly from the telephone:

"Good day, Miss Temple; look at the snow."

"Very beautiful indeed," replied a fresh, sweet voice from the telephone.

"Aren't you afraid? Are we still going to the Bernina?" he exclaimed, with a trembling of the voice which he could not conquer.

"Yes, we are still going," she replied, in a secure and tranquil voice.

"Can I come, then?"

"Of course; *au revoir*."

He crossed the silent, deserted little streets of the Dorf in a great hurry; the shops were scarcely opening their doors; the window-panes were dim, and behind the window cases the shutters were still barred. At the hotel doors the little *chasseurs*, in dark green uniform, were beating their feet against the road. Not a soul was going up or coming down; not a soul was on the square

before the "Kulm"; but, faithful to orders, the coachman was there with his carriage, only he was wrapped up in a heavy cloak, and had placed rugs over his two fat, strong horses, so that they should not catch cold while he waited. Now and then the horses shook their heads, causing all their bells to tinkle. The air was calm and equable, but very cold. Lucio Sabini entered the vestibule, and found himself in the large Egyptian hall, where there was not a soul; after a moment he saw Lilian Temple coming towards him. The dear girl was dressed in a short dress of black cloth, with a short, pleated skirt. She wore a close-fitting jacket of otter-skin, buttoned up closely, brightened by a cravat of white lace; she had on a little black hat, with a white lace veil fitting closely over the rosy face and blond hair. Like a boy of eighteen in love, Lucio Sabini found her more beautiful than ever. On her arm she carried a heavy cloak and a carriage-rug, which she placed on a chair to give her hand to Lucio.

"The carriage is waiting," he murmured vaguely, in the first moment of happy confusion which Lilian's presence always caused him.

"I heard the bells," she murmured, equally confused, showing her confusion more than he.

"It is very cold."

"It doesn't matter."

"Of course it doesn't matter," he consented, speaking as if in a dream.

There was a silence between them: a silence full of things.

"Isn't Miss Ford ready yet?" he asked, to break the silence.

"She isn't coming to the Bernina," replied Lilian simply.

"Not coming?" asked Lucio, startled and disturbed.

"She is no longer so young. She suffers from rheumatism, and it is very cold," said Lilian sweetly.

Again he experienced a moment of atrocious doubt, and was atrociously oppressed by the thought of the excursion postponed, of the day missed.

"And are we to go alone?" he asked, hesitating, and fearing the reply.

"We two are going alone," replied Lilian serenely.

It was impossible for him, a man over whom so many intoxicating and terrible emotions had passed, to dominate the pallor which disturbed his face, and the blush that afterwards suffused it. He could say nothing for the interior tumult of his being. She, still serene, added:

"Dear May wishes me to leave a note to tell her what time we shall probably return. At what time shall we return, Signor Sabini?"

"At six, I think; not before," he stammered.

"The whole day, then," replied the girl. She went to a table and wrote a note on a leaf from her pocket-book, enclosed it in an envelope, and gave it to a servant. Then her periwinkle-blue eyes invited Lucio to follow her to the stairs which descended to the vestibule; a little *chasseur* came after them, carrying the wraps and the rug. Agilely Lilian climbed up with a spring, Lucio placed himself beside her, the *chasseur* spread the rug over their knees and settled the wraps. The coachman, too, wrapped his feet and body in a covering as far as his chest, and cracked his whip; the bells tinkled, the carriage started along the silent road that crosses the Dorf and inclines towards the wood on the hill of Charadüras, and set off at a trot into the silent country, all white with snow.

As a reaction to his immense emotion of a few moments ago, Lucio Sabini was invaded by a wave of cynicism. So this beautiful girl with whom he was in love, and who was in love with him, was left in his power, she was given to him for a whole day without hardly anyone knowing where they had gone; alone for a whole

day, scarcely being asked, and that by chance, the hour of return, perhaps merely to fix the dinner-hour ; and Miss May Ford was doing this, Lilian Temple's only guardian, she to whom her father had entrusted her as a second mother. But were these Englishwomen, young and old, stupid and fools, or corrupt ? And did they think him an idiot or a saint ? Why was the girl entrusted to him, to whom he had been making love for three weeks ? So that he should compromise her, perhaps, and be forced to marry her ? What a stupid joke to play on an experienced man like him ; there was not a Miss Ford in the land of Albion, or any other land, who could have managed him ! And was Lilian Temple unaware—an idiot, an accomplice ? An accomplice ? Frowning and stern, he bit his lips beneath his moustaches. The carriage crossed the great Valley of Samaden, where the snow covered the Corvatsch and the Muotta to their bases, and extended in white flutings over the expanses of the meadows.

"What is the matter ? " Lilian suddenly asked, after too long a silence.

At first she looked at him timidly, then more frankly. And he saw in her face an expression he had never noticed before.

"I am tired," he replied coldly.

"Tired ? "

"I slept badly and little," he replied dully, frowning.

"But why ? "

"I don't know, I can't tell you, Miss Temple," he concluded, turning his head away to avoid her glance.

"Then," she said quietly, "this excursion must bore you a lot."

"Oh ! " he exclaimed ambiguously.

"Let us turn back," she proposed, simply and sincerely.

"Turn back ? Turn back ? "

"Certainly. We will go another day to the Bernina. It is very far, and you are so tired."

He looked into her eyes and listened to every inflection of her voice; but he discovered nothing but naturalness, loyalty, and candour.

"Would you turn back, Miss Temple? Would you give up the outing?"

"Certainly, to let you rest to-day, and see you this evening charming and happy."

"For me, Lilian?"

"For you, dear," she replied, with a tremble of affection. All Lucio Sabini's heart broke in tenderness: all the gall of cynicism, all the poison of corruption was conquered and destroyed. She could not understand how base had been his thoughts and how he repented of having yielded to such base thoughts: Lilian could not have understood one of those infamous ideas. She noticed that he was bending over her to speak to her in his Italian tongue which she only half understood, which he adopted so spontaneously in moments of abandonment and sentimental dedication.

"Povero caro amor mio . . . tanto caro."

"What are you saying?" she asked, a little anxiously.

"Beautiful things, things of love," he replied, enchanted, gazing at her.

"I don't want to lose them; say them in English, or French. I don't understand everything in Italian," she murmured with a gracious pout of disdain.

"Why don't you understand Italian, little Lilian? You are wrong: you should understand."

"I am going to learn this Italian," she declared promptly.

"When?" he asked, fascinated.

"In a little while, in the autumn, when I am in England," she said decisively, in a low voice. Her little

gloved hand lay upon the rug : he took it and interlaced her fingers softly in his own.

"The days are so long in autumn and winter in my country," she said dreamily.

He was silent beneath her enchantment, as he pressed her hand.

"I want to write to you for Christmas," she added, her large blue eyes full of visions, "a nice little letter all in Italian, dear."

"But first," he asked, enamoured and impatient, "you will write me nice long letters in French or English?"

"Why, of course, always," she replied, with that certainty which now and then smote him and disturbed him, afterwards to conquer him.

In her certainty Lilian did not ask him if he would always reply ; as if it were unnecessary to ask anything so certain and evident, as if words served not to declare and promise a certainty.

"Do you mean to say," he resumed, with an emotion that veiled each accent, "do you mean to say, that that angel Lilian Temple is a little fond of Lucio Sabini, who deserves it not?"

"I do mean to say so," she affirmed, simply and loyally.

Nor did Lilian Temple ask Lucio Sabini, in return, if he loved her a little, as if she were unshaken in her conviction that Lucio was fond of her ; and to hear so once again were unnecessary. Once again Lilian's high loyalty, her deep faith, her absolute trust, which never having lied could not suppose a lie, moved Lucio to his depths. He felt himself, as in the most impassioned moments of his love, another man, transformed and remade, incapable of deceit, incapable of fraud ; he felt himself, like the girl, vibrating with sincerity and worthy of the faith she had in him, since he was, as she was, sustained by an immense certainty. The more

tremulous became his sensibility, the more fluid his tenderness, the more impetuous his need of offering his all, of giving himself completely.

"I am yours," he said solemnly in English.

"I am yours," she replied simply.

"Everything is so white here," she said, "ever so much whiter than down below."

She pointed with a vague gesture of the hand to the districts they had left behind, to St. Moritz, Celerina, Pontresina, where the snow of the night was already disappearing, while on the Bernina road they were traversing, rather slowly, ever climbing to the regular pace of the horses and the feeble tinkling of the bells, the night's snow still remained intact. The snow covered in great tracts of whiteness the last solitary meadows which hid the banks of rocks that the winter avalanches had precipitated in the silent valleys; it covered in tracts the first hills that ascended towards the loftier mountains, and united on high the August snow with the many ancient snows of so many winters which the summer's sun had been unable to melt, and, finally, last night's snow had placed a new splendour over the glaciers. As Lilian and Lucio went on their way in the grand Alpine solitude, the whiteness increased around them; in the rarefied air the breath that escaped from the horses' nostrils seemed a light smoke which hovered about them.

"Oh, how everything becomes whiter," Lilian repeated, conquered by the spectacle, "nothing is more beautiful than all this whiteness."

"The snow resembles you rather," murmured Lucio, looking at her and not at the landscape.

She shook her blond head, a shadow of a smile playing on her lips.

"Snow is destroyed in the countries where men live," she added, "but it remains pure and intact on high."

"Like it, you are pure," he whispered, as he gazed again at her, enamoured.

Now and then she flushed beneath the ardour of his glance; the blood rushed to the roots of her blond tresses, a tender smile played about the beautiful, chaste mouth.

"They gave you such a beautiful name—Lilian," he told her again, with ardent sweetness.

"Do you really like it?"

"How is it you were given such a beautiful name—Lilian—Lilian?"

"It is an ordinary name in my country, in England," she replied, speaking dreamily.

"It is the name of a flower."

"A great many names of flowers are used for children in my country, in England—Rose, Daisy, Violet. My mother was called Violet—Violet Temple."

"But your name, the lily, is the name of an Italian flower—one of our flowers, dear."

"I know that," she added thoughtfully, "it is the emblem of Florence, *your* Florence."

If it is mine, it is also *your* Florence," he exclaimed, enamoured.

"Is everything you love and prefer also mine, dear?" she asked, fixing him with her large eyes, so blue and loyal.

"Everything," he exclaimed, with a burning glance.

She paled, and the little hand that was in Lucio's shook convulsively. A short, intense giddiness overwhelmed them, and they looked at each other, frightened and lost. The carriage still proceeded slowly; it had skirted the whole of the glacier of Morteratsch, afterwards leaving it on the right, still ascending among the lofty, fearful peaks of the Tschierva, the Bellavista, Crast' Agüzza, and lording it in their midst in an indescribable purity, was the sovereign of the

mountains, the virgin of the mountains, the lofty and tremendous Bernina. On the left, instead, valleys opened, surrounded by mountains less lofty, with broad meadows still full green ; at a gap in one of these, all flourishing with vegetation, like an oasis confronting the terrible chain of the Bernina, a country girl came towards them, offering flowers. To conquer the agitation that kept dominating him, Lucio made the carriage stop. Buxom and blond and rosy, the country girl offered bunches of fresh flowers which she had gathered an hour ago, bunches of dark blue and purple gentians, masses of Alpine orchids of a tender pink with dark markings, and fresh edelweiss, still almost bathed in snow.

" Here, Lilian," he resumed in a still agitated voice, " is a valley full of flowers, the Valley of Fieno, but it is too far away ; here are its flowers."

And he took them all from the hands and arms of the peasant girl and emptied them in Lilian's hands ; the rug and the whole carriage were covered with flowers, and smiling, the peasant girl bade them *adieu* as she jingled the money in her rough hand. Lilian pressed the flowers to her, smelt them, and buried her face in them in her usual gentle way, while the carriage resumed, more quickly, its way towards the lofty Bernina Pass.

" You have been on other occasions to the Bernina ? " she asked, in a low voice.

" Yes, several times : I have been everywhere."

" Also in this valley that you say is full of flowers ? "

" Yes, dear Lilian."

" And you have given these beautiful flowers to many other women, haven't you ? " she continued, looking at him, with a shade of melancholy in her glance.

" What does it matter ? " he exclaimed, with a vivacious nod, as if to abolish the past.

" You have forgotten them all," she concluded, without looking at him, as if she were talking to herself.

"You are *different*, Lilian," he said.

She believed him at once and smiled at him, herself desirous of dispersing the cloud of sadness which had passed over their souls.

"Have you ever climbed to the top of one of those mountains? Have you climbed the Monte Bernina, dear? Tell me everything, please."

"I climbed two or three times, Lilian, when I was younger, bolder, and less lazy; not right to the Bernina, dear, but to the Diavolezza beneath the Bernina."

"Is it far and difficult or high? Can one get there? How I envy you! It must be so beautiful!"

"Beautiful and sad, Lilian—very sad. It is a landscape that dazes and contracts the heart. Up there one thinks of the many who at different times have attempted to climb ever higher and have perished, Lilian. Up there, too, it is such a strange country. Imagine amidst all the whiteness a mountain completely black, called Monte Perso, and there is also at its foot a glacier, the Perso glacier; and, strange to say, a great space of rocks and stones, all black, which cuts the glacier, the Isle of Perso—why, one knows not. I have told you all, Lilian."

"I should like to go there," she added, with all the strength of her race.

The air became colder, as they reached the goal. The whole region became more arid, and more outstanding in their majesty the lofty peaks of the Palù and the Cambrena, the one completely white, the other streaked with white and black in a peculiar palette of two colours—the black rock and white ice.

"Are you cold, dear?" he asked tenderly.

"Yes, a little cold; just a little."

"Let us get down, dear; we are almost there. We will walk to the Hospice along the lakes."

In helping her to descend he took her in his arms,

like a child, to place her on the ground. Involuntarily he pressed her to himself for a moment ; he saw her grow pale and he paled himself. He felt himself losing his self-control. As they walked he gave her his arm silently ; the carriage drew away towards the Hospice of the Bernina, which could be seen, like a far-off grey point against the diverse brightness of the lakes. They skirted the motionless waters of the first lake ; around its shores were neither trees, nor plants, nor flowers, nor grass. There were only stones, blackish or yellowish earth, and as they extended their glance ahead other waters appeared, motionless, reflecting the whiteness of the Cambrena, and the brown fillets of rocks which cut the glacier—the deep black water of the Lago Nero, the quite clear water of the Lago Bianco—while only a tongue of brown earth separated the dark waters from the clear ; but there were no trees, nor flowers, nor grass. Silently the two walked on ; she now and then oppressed by her vast surroundings, so strange and lifeless. He pressed her closer to him as he led and supported her, now and then murmuring, as in an amorous refrain :

“ Dear, dear Lilian, dear.”

On the way they were pursuing, some carriages overtook them, going towards the Hospice. Besides travellers, wrapped in heavy wraps, and women in furs, the carriages were loaded with baggage.

“ They are descending to Italy,” murmured Lucio.

“ I envy them,” she said, as if to herself.

“ You ought not to envy anyone, dear,” he repeated ardently. “ Wherever Lilian is, there is the country ; because there is love.”

Like music, now tender and now violent, his words, even vague, even imprecise, even indefinite to the questions she often asked him, were like the music of softness and passion ; his words caressed her with a fresh breeze

or ate into her heart like tongues of flame. For a moment she closed her eyes and forgot that she had received no reply to her question ; she closed her eyes and allowed herself to be destroyed by that flame.

People were coming and going before the Hospice ; the horses had been taken out of three or four carriages to be fed and watered before resuming the journey to Italy ; also there were carts and carters. Everyone, travellers, coachmen, carters, and hotel servants, were in winter costume, and stamping their feet on the ground against the cold. The deep grey of the hotel, which had been a Hospice for travellers, and the brown, clear waters of the motionless lakes beneath the snows and glaciers of the Cambrena, the Carale, the Sassal Masone, and, further away, the yoke of the Bernina, behind which the road descended suddenly to Italy—all had the cold and sad aspect of a winter landscape in the high mountains, without a tree or flower.

"Would you stay a month here with me ? " Lucio asked Lilian at the door of the hotel.

"Yes, certainly," she replied at once, with that peculiar certainty of hers.

"Let us pretend that it is the first day," he whispered into her ear, "that we are bridegroom and bride on our honeymoon."

Again she became pale ; again he felt too strong an emotion preventing his self-control. Profoundly disturbed they passed along the narrow, almost gloomy corridor which divided the rooms of the Hospice, and penetrated the little reading-room, which they found invaded by a little caravan of Germans, men and women, while the room was full of smoke from the pipes the men were smoking. To avoid all this they went into the vast dining-room, and around them hovered a waiter and waitress, to ask if they were staying for the afternoon, the night, or a week. Lucio only replied now and then

with a vague smile, holding Lilian's hand in his, more than ever enamoured, like a bridegroom. She was silent and absorbed ; the waiter and the waitress left them by one of the windows of the room, where already those who wanted luncheon were arriving. Behind the panes Lilian and Lucio exchanged some rare words of childish, sentimental intimacy, rather vibrant, and pronounced softly, with an indescribable accent, and they gazed at, perhaps without seeing, the lofty Cambrena, black with rocks and white with ice, and the four little lakes which almost seemed to advance from the back of the valley and surround the grey Hospice, with their waters of such strangely different hues.

" Are you still cold, adored little Lilian ? "

" No, not any longer, dear ; and you ? "

" I ? I am on fire, dear, sweet Lily."

" Do you find all this too sad ? I believe you do not like anything sad."

" I have no eyes for sadness, Lilian, when I am with you."

Now, like children in love, they wandered from room to room, finding nearly all the doors wide open. Within the beds were made and covered with dark quilts ; everything was orderly, but empty and inanimate. Only in one room, as they looked from the threshold, they saw clothes thrown on to chairs, books upon a writing-table, and fresh flowers in vases. They withdrew smiling, afraid of being caught. The waiter who, as he came and went, met them now and then in their little pilgrimage, explained to them that since the Hospice had become an hotel, every summer season people passed a week there or a fortnight ; even that year there had been many till a few days ago, but with the rain and snow of the last two days many had left for Switzerland and Italy. Now only a few still remained ; but at the Hospice of the Bernina most people passed through,

travellers who were going to Valletina or Switzerland, and who all stopped for two or three hours to change horses and have luncheon.

"On some days, when it is a good season, we have a hundred to lunch," concluded the waiter, with importance.

"And to-day?" asked Lucio.

"Oh, nothing, just twenty."

"Are you hungry, Lilian?" asked Lucio, smiling at her.

"Yes; I shall be glad of lunch."

"Let us go, dear, and choose our table; we will place our flowers there."

They chose one in a remote corner of the vast dining-room, and the banality of the table was adorned by the dark gentians, the spiked orchids, and the fresh edelweiss; like two children, looking around and fondling each other's hands, they filled a vase and two glasses with them. Lucio had the two places changed; instead of facing Lilian, he wished to have her beside him and while the waiter withdrew to serve their lunch, seated at the little table, they were alone like two lovers for the first time. Forgetful of everything except their love, they began to talk, turning one to the other, their faces close together, their words subdued, their smiles expressive and suggestive, their glances now laughing and now ardent; their hearts and fibres welled with the deep sweetness of the idyll and ardour of passion. In the dining-room, already more than twenty people were lunching and talking loudly, especially the German gathering; there was a noise of plates and knives, with a smell of food that was diffused in the rather heavy air of the room which was nearly always closed against the cold; but, isolated in their corner, Lilian and Lucio paid no heed to the others. Even they lunched: sometimes their idyll or passion guided their actions, now

graciously puerile, now full of an unconquerable trembling, as with a smile and a glance, or a fleeting squeeze of the hand or gesture of tenderness, they lunched like a newly married couple on the first day of their marriage ; the man seeking the woman's glass to place his lips where she had placed hers, the woman offering half the fruit which she had eaten, now and then forgetting to eat, to look and smile at each other, as the waiter came and went to and fro, silent, discreet, and indifferent, without attempting to recall them to reality.

At the other tables everyone had finished lunch ; the Germans especially rose noisily, the men with their congested faces, the women wearing on their blond, yellowish hair the same masculine hats as their husbands and fathers ; but Lucio and Lilian at their table, from which the things had been removed, allowed their coffee to grow cold in their cups, and absently they plucked off the petals of the Alpine orchids and edelweiss with their fingers and scattered them on the table in strange designs. They were now alone at the little table in the corner, and knew nothing of what was happening around them ; only the silent, but questioning and respectful presence of the waiter made them rise, after Lucio had paid the bill.

" It will be very cold later for the return," said the waiter suggestively, as if he were inviting them to stay.

A single, intense glance between them told of what they were thinking. Agitatedly Lilian approached the window from which they had looked out without seeing the country ; beside them, on a little table, a great book lay open, with white pages signed with signatures, mottoes, and dates, the album of the Bernina Hospice, wherein every passer-by placed his name. To hide her deep confusion, Lilian turned over some pages, stooping to read, almost without understanding, some unknown name, some words of admiration, remembrance, or

regret of those who had crossed the Bernina Pass. Suddenly she perceived that Lucio was beside her, and that he, too, was reading ; more agitated, she did not turn, as she tried to read more attentively, and together they read a sentence in French, with two signatures, "*Vive l'amour.—Laure et Francis.*"

" Shall we write something, Lillian ? " he whispered, with his arm around her waist.

" Yes," she murmured.

They bent over the book together : she wrote first, in French, in a rather trembling handwriting, "*À toi, pour la vie, pour la mort.—Lilian.*" Promptly he wrote after her, in a firm, decisive handwriting, "*À toi, pour la vie, pour la mort.—Lucio,*" and a date. Their glances repeated, affirmed, and swore what they had written, as they went out of the deserted dining-room into the narrow, semi-dark corridor, where there was no one. He kept her for a moment in the half-light ; embracing her lightly, he drew her to him, and gave her a long kiss on the lips, a kiss of love, which she returned as well. He felt her reel as if lost ; he, too, felt himself overcome with joy. With a supreme effort he took her hand, supported her, and led her away to the staircase of the Hospice, and outside into the full light and open air, where for a moment they stopped half blinded, without seeing anything, without looking at each other, without recognising each other, as if both were lost.

As if an indisputable need constrained them to fly from some unknown danger, they walked along the shores of the four little lakes, stopping to admire the waters. They proceeded to where the tail of the Cambréna glacier descends and winds, and they bent over the spring that gushes from it to bathe their hands, which were on fire ; they went further, beyond the yoke and the Bernina Pass, following the carts and carriages which were in motion ; they went by a long

hill, whence they saw a flock of sheep, with their shepherd and guardian dog, proceeding with slow steps, occasionally halting, and then resuming their way ; throughout the summer they had been in the Engadine, and now, driven away by the cold, were descending towards Italy, towards Poschiaro. They went forward themselves on the road to Italy, and saw the little village of La Rosa gleaming white below. They went everywhere, tiring their bodies and their souls.

As the day declined they returned to the door of the Hospice, but neither climbed the stairs again. They remained at the threshold, exchanging some glances full of a silent and immense sadness, but not a word opened their lips to say how immense was their grief. The carriage was ready, and the horses were tinkling their bells ; the waiter came down, carrying rugs and cloaks and flowers. Lucio and Lilian jumped into the carriage to return to St. Moritz Dorf. Again they looked at the grey Hospice, which became gloomier in the declining day, in that obscure corner of the earth, amidst its four mysterious lakes, and an immense sadness bade farewell to that tarrying-place of an hour of love. Then they left in silence. Gloomy and stern, with hat almost lowered over his eyes, Lucio first became calm by degrees, while pale and sad, beneath her white veil, Lilian, too, grew calmer. Gradually a gentleness, ever softer and more persuasive, poured itself like balsam over their grief and regret. They drew near to each other, affectionately and simply ; a tenderness united their hands and kept them joined, a tenderness flowed from their few words, in their voices, in their names pronounced now and then. A tenderness seized, kept, and dominated them on their return journey, amid the ever-increasing gloom of the twilight, and when they reached their goal, both were exalted by tenderness. But Lucio Sabini was also exalted by renunciation.

CHAPTER XVI

IN the embrasure of a window the tall figure of Otto von Raabe was silhouetted more darkly against the shadow of the night ; he stooped a little to reply in a low voice to the subdued and quiet questions of Paul Léon, who was standing beside him. Both had their faces turned towards the room ; every now and then they threw a glance to the back of it. Outside, over their shoulders, a portion of the sky shone with stars.

" To gather flowers ? " asked the French poet, after a long silence, his eyes apparently veiled by deep, inward thought.

" Yes, to gather flowers, merely to gather flowers," murmured the German.

" Flowers ? What flowers ? " insisted the Frenchman strangely.

" Some beautiful flowers he was told were up there ; he went to look for them."

" And did he find them ? "

" He found them—he always used to find them—they are still in his hands."

" They left them with him."

" Of course, look," said the German, pointing to the back of the room.

On a little white bed lay the corpse of Massimo Granata. The little body broken by the tremendous fall from the precipice, at the skirts of the Pizota, was piously laid out, and covered with a dark red, silk quilt, right to the breast ; and the little body of the poor rickety, deformed man scarcely raised the covering. The head had

been bandaged, and the pinched yellow countenance was framed by the whiteness of its lines, whose eyes, full of goodness and dreams, were closed for ever ; and even the face seemed diminished and like that of a child, dead from some incurable disease endured since birth. The pallid hands, long and fleshless, with knotty fingers, were crossed on the breast, and they still clasped a little bunch of unknown Alpine flowers ; they clasped them in a last act of love over the heart that beat no more. Some long strings of mountain flowers had been scattered loosely on the quilt, as if to surround in a garland of flowers the corpse of Massimo Granata. On the simple furniture of the simple room flowers had been placed here and there in big and little vases ; some were already withered, which had been gathered two or three days before his death ; others, fresher, had been gathered recently, before his last walk. On a night table before the humble little bed there were an ivory crucifix and two candlesticks with two lighted candles—all placed on a white cloth. The two electric lamps of the room had been veiled. Karl Ehbehard, the great consumption doctor, was seated on one side at the foot of the bed, motionless and silent, with bowed head.

"Karl Ehbehard was the first to be told," added Otto von Raabe, shaking his head, fixing the closed, granite-like face of the doctor with his indescribably blue eyes. "He has known him for more than twenty years ; he loved him."

"Was his assistance of no avail ? " Paul Léon asked very softly.

"Quite useless. Massimo had been dead for ten hours when they brought him here."

"And who brought him ? "

"Some shepherds up above," continued Otto von Raabe, his voice breaking with mortal sadness. "Every-one knew him at the Alp Laret, at the Alp Nova, at the

Fiori. Everyone used to greet him and speak to him. You know that."

"Everywhere it was so," added Paul Léon, with lowered eyes.

"They saw him pass early in the morning. They warned him that the ascent was rough and dangerous. When, after so many hours, they did not see him descending again, they climbed to look for him."

"Those shepherds are used to that."

"They are used to it, poor people. They searched a long time, and at last they discovered him at the foot of a precipice. It seems that the edge was hidden by those flowers. He leant over too much."

"He died like a child in a fairy tale, like a child," said the poet, his bright eyes now veiled.

Two other people entered without making a noise the room where Massimo Granata was sleeping the first night of his last sleep; the one was Giovanni Vergas, an Italian gentleman, seventy years old, with beautifully trimmed white beard and aristocratic and courteous appearance; the other was Monsieur Jean Morel, a Frenchman of seventy-five, thin, withered, without any skin on his face, furrowed by a thousand little wrinkles. Without speaking, they exchanged a nod with Karl Ehbehard and the two who were standing in the embrasure of the window, then they went and sat on a little sofa of black horsehair, which leant against a wall, and remained there silently. When the news of the tragedy arrived, at seven o'clock in the evening, both had been informed, and they had found Karl Ehbehard there, who, in great silence, was laying out the fractured body of the poor dead man. He washed and clothed it, then placed it quietly again on the bed, covering it with a quilt, then the good mistress of the house, Frau von Scheidegg, scattered two rows of flowers around the corpse, as she wept silently. Don Giovanni Vergas and

Jean Morel had remained there a little, then they promised to return. Now they had returned to watch with the others the body of the lover of the mountains, of him who had given his life for his love. Paul Léon, being informed, had arrived later than the others from Sils Maria, and he was still asking questions to learn everything, with a trembling and sorrowful curiosity, from Otto von Raabe, of the beautiful, dreamy soul, of the heart sensitive and soft in spite of his rough, wild appearance.

Slowly, with cautious steps, they approached the other two and sat beside them, forming a little restricted circle, as they bent their heads to breathe forth the sorrowful words of their sad conversation. Isolated, and wrapped up in his silence, Karl von Ehbehard watched over his friend and companion, his brother in love of the mountains.

"How old could he be?" asked Jean Morel.

"Sixty, perhaps," replied Giovanni Vergas.

"He looked more," murmured Paul Léon.

"He never was young; he never has been healthy; he always suffered so much," explained Otto von Raabe.

"Only here he did not suffer," concluded the French poet.

Some minutes of silence passed, each appeared immersed in his own intimate thoughts.

"He has been here for many years," resumed Paul Léon. "I remember him for such a long time, and I have been coming for twenty years."

"And I now for ten," concluded Jean Morel. "I was one of the first here."

"He seems always to have lived in this furnished room. The lady of the house was very fond of him; she and her daughter are mourning below."

"He was poor, was he not?" asked Paul Léon.

"Yes, poor," replied the German, "a very humble

professor ; for relations he had one brother and some nephews. We have sent them a telegram."

They were again silent. Frau von Scheidegg entered discreetly. She carried a great mass of fresh flowers. Approaching the circle of the four men, she said quietly :

"Two ladies, friends of the Herr Professor, sent them—the Misses Ford and James. I will place the flowers at his feet."

Advancing, and after crossing herself and saying a short prayer, the old German woman deposited the mass of fresh flowers on the quilt, where the two marble feet of the defunct raised the silken fabric a little, on those feet which had taken their last steps, and which would never more impress their tread on the grass of the high meadows, and amidst the dust of the broken rocks. Then she crossed herself again, and left.

"Do you think, Von Raabe, that the brother will come to fetch him away ? "

"No," replied a different voice. "No, he will not go away."

It was Karl von Ehbehard who replied thus. He got up from his place, joined the other four, and stood in their midst, tall and thin, but breathing will and energy, and the others looked at him with sympathy and admiration ; for they knew his history and life. The five worshippers of the high mountains, the five lovers of the Engadine were united in a group ; Jean Morel, who had been for forty years ; Paul Léon, the French poet, who had been for twenty ; Don Giovanni Vergas, the head of a princely Italian house, who fled the yellow sands and the blue of Italy for the white heights of the Grisons ; Otto von Raabe, the German millionaire banker, who had all the poesy of nature and heart in his mind, and Karl von Ehbehard, he who had found life up there, and who was trying to give it back to others—all the little group of mountain lovers were watching round

another of them, who had been the victim of his love, on his funeral night.

"He will not go away," replied Ehbehard, "too much money is wanted to take away a corpse to Italy, and the Granata are poor. Our friend will rest here among us——" and suddenly the hard, cold voice broke.

"We ought to give him a great procession to-morrow," exclaimed Paul Léon, after glancing at the bandaged face of the dead man, which seemed like that of a child. "Carry him away loaded with flowers, through the broad roads, and give him a triumph, this hero of the mountains."

"That will not be possible," said Karl von Ehbehard, his voice suddenly becoming hard.

"Why?" asked Otto von Raabe.

"Because *they* won't allow it," said the doctor roughly.

"Who won't allow it? Who?" asked Paul Léon, with agitation.

"All do not wish it; no one wishes it," replied the great doctor bitterly. "The people in the hotels of the Dorf do not wish to see the dead, do not wish to know of disease; they have a horror of all that. These pleasure-seekers have for a motto, '*Evviva la vita!*' They want to enjoy their pleasures here to the last without being disturbed; so the authorities, hotel-keepers, and others try in every way to prevent these pleasure-seekers from seeing a melancholy spectacle, for fear that they will leave two or three days sooner, or even one day. When people die here, no one knows when they are taken to the cemetery; no one is aware of it."

"What cruelty!" said Otto von Raabe sorrowfully.

"What infamy!" cried Paul indignantly.

"And shall we carry poor Massimo away thus?" asked Giovanni Vergas, trembling with horror.

"We shall bear him away the same as the others," said Doctor Karl von Ehbehard gloomily; "at dawn,

when all the pleasure-seekers are sleeping, we shall carry him away on a simple bier, covered with a white cloth, and carried on the shoulders of two strong men, without any other funeral pomp, and we shall have to climb up through the wood from the Dorf, along steep and unknown paths, so that no one may meet us or see us, so there will only be us to accompany him, we who loved him and love the same things that he loved."

There was a lugubrious silence, and if the eyes of all those men were not shedding tears, weeping was within their desolate souls. Meanwhile two people entered quietly, approached the corpse, and contemplated it--Lucio Sabini and Lilian Temple. Lucio Sabini, too, had been warned to come and see the unfortunate man who had perished on high in a morning of the declining August, holding in his hands a bunch of flowers, and who had lain for hours at the foot of a precipice, and had been brought back on a bier of tree trunks, covered by the rough garments of the shepherds who had found him, to the bed where he had slept for twenty beautiful seasons amidst his mountains. Lucio promised to return, and had done so, accompanied by Lilian. The English girl was wearing a black dress and hat, and her pure, virginal face seemed whiter than ever, and more blond her soft hair. Side by side they gazed at the deformed face, with its pointed cheek-bones and large, pallid mouth, the face that had suffered so much and had never had peace and joy save amid the lofty peaks, near the sky, in silent, benignant solitude, amid the aroma of trees and the fragrance of leaves and flowers.

"Poor, poor Massimo," said Lucio, as if to himself.

"Do not weep for him," said the firm, soft voice of Lilian beside him, "you should not weep for him."

He questioned her with his glance.

"He died for his passion and his dream; we ought to

envy him, and not weep for him," said the girl, seriously and sincerely.

She added no more. They had now joined the other five in a single group at the back of the death chamber.

Karl Ehbehard said to them :

" We will accompany him through the Waldpromenade, from St. Moritz Dorf towards Chassellas, to the cemetery of St. Moritz Bad, to the little solitary cemetery amidst the woods and meadows, beneath the gentle Suvretta, opposite the majestic Margna, in front of the lakes of Silvaplana and Sils. There we will bury him among the humble Engadiners, and among those strangers who come here from other countries to die, as he came."

Lilian gave Lucio a sweet, expressive glance, as if to remind him how in that place, in the soft summer twilight, they had known each other ; and he remembered and smiled, sadly and sweetly.

" He will sleep there, like so many others who have died here, without anyone being aware of it," added the doctor, relapsing into his thoughts and dreams.

The English girl drew near to him softly.

" You need not weep for him to-morrow or to-day, Doctor," she said in a quiet, soft voice ; " I am sure that he desired to be buried there in the little cemetery ; I am sure that it is the best place for his long rest."

CHAPTER XVII

AFTER the snow of the 26th of August a pure sky was resplendent in vain in the Upper Engadine, an exaltation for the eye and the imagination ; in vain a wondrous golden sun enlivened everything, in vain did an even more victorious and absorbing fascination emanate from the whole countryside, and in vain the beauty of things became more absorbing and penetrating. Everything was in vain for a crowd that wished to depart, and nothing availed to keep it now that it was bent on fleeing. It was a crowd that no longer had eyes, or feelings, or nerves, with which to see and feel and respond ; it was a crowd that was blind, deaf, and inert to every joy-bearing impression, dominated and absorbed as it was by its desire of departing. With the same impetus with which it had arrived from all parts and every distant country a month ago, had violently and feverishly invaded hotels, *pensions*, and villas, filling them to overflowing, had peopled the most remote and deserted corners, had placed its outposts on the most impervious slopes and climbed the loftiest peaks : with this same irresistible impetus by which it had conquered and fashionably devastated the silence, calm, and poesy of the Upper Engadine, that crowd was now turning its back, departing, and fleeing, without anyone or anything availing to delay its departure for an hour or a day. But the departure did not seem like a departure, it resembled a precipitous flight, a *sauve qui peut*, as if there had been a summons to some lofty duty or to the enjoyment of some great pleasure.

For a week the little station of St. Moritz Dorf had been besieged by the crowd, to book seats in *wagons-lits* in the expresses of the great international lines for Paris, London, Brussels, Berlin, Frankfort, and it would leave the station disconsolate, because for days the places in the *wagons-lits* on all lines had been taken; for at the mere idea of being forced to continue its sojourn for a day or an hour in the Engadine, the despairing crowd caused it to rain telegrams, offering to pay to have the *wagons-lits* and first-class carriages increased, in a state of agitation at every little obstacle that hindered its departure and flight. For a week the post office of St. Moritz Bad had been hedged in by a crowd booking places in the mail-coaches that descended twice a day into Italy, but so many people wanted to leave that places were lacking and every day the office added extra carriages, but even these were insufficient; so the exasperated crowd that wished to descend pell-mell into Italy booked special carriages at a high fee, just to get away on the day and the hour, without giving a glance behind. For a week conversations overlapped.

"I have my places for Tuesday evening. . . ."

"I have telegraphed to Zurich. . . ."

"I am expecting a telegram from Basle. . . ."

"We hired a carriage from Tiraboschi to descend. . . ."

"Frau Goertz has given up her places in the *wagons-lits* to me: she is returning to Italy by carriage from the Bernina. . . ."

"If I am unable to find places in *wagons-lits* I shall descend to Chiavenna, and go from thence to the frontier at Chiasso."

Never had the Upper Engadine been so beautiful. Its surrounding colours and its breezes had indescribable charms in those last days of August. It seemed to change its aspect a hundred times, each more graceful than the other, it was a medley of the brightest colours, it

appeared to be swimming in a divine, crystalline air, and to be poised amidst the most vivid freshness. So sensitive souls, hearts secretly pierced, spirits being poisoned by slow poison—some rare soul, some rare heart and spirit—at such exquisite beauty felt themselves trembling with a new, mysterious life, felt themselves in those last days healed of all their old bleeding wounds and freed from gall and bitterness, as if a powerful and unknown medicine had performed such a miracle. But when even for them the hour of departure drew near, a great regret, a great grief, and an immense nostalgia oppressed and suffocated their hearts.

But if by chance a long sigh of nostalgia for the Engadine land escaped their oppressed hearts, where they had found a balm for all their wounds, if this sigh became a word or an expression, scandalised, the crowd would turn and brutally tell the poor man or woman that it was ridiculous, yes, ridiculous, to want to remain even a single day longer. Brutally the crowd reduced to silence the timid man or tender woman who would still have liked, in those few beautiful September days, to console, heal, and free themselves amidst the grace, purity, and simplicity of the Engadine. Silently timid man and tender woman bowed the head, expressing all the grief of broken dreams, the nostalgia for things that would have consoled, healed, and freed them and which they must implacably leave.

Implacably the crowd bustled, racketing everywhere, with hurry, anxiety, and despair, to arrange its departure. In hotel rooms there was a dull and continuous shock of boxes being put down and lifted, of heavy luggage being filled and strapped, of opening and closing of wardrobes, with a continuous, nervous ringing of electric bells. The coming and going in corridors and salons of managers, waiters, chambermaids, servants, and porters was vertiginous; the offices of the hotels

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were in a continuous bustle, getting ready bills and cashing money at all hours ; the porters no longer had a minute's peace, taking a hundred orders, at the same time, for a hundred things incidental to departure, and every evening, at the great desk of the head porter, on a long black board, written in chalk, were the numbers of the rooms which would be free on the following day, and the number of passengers who would be leaving. Joyfully, brutally, the crowd jostled before the blackboard and read there that a part of them, an ever greater part, would be leaving to-morrow by such and such a train, by such and such a post-carriage.

" Twenty-seven people left this morning."

" To-morrow, see, thirty-eight are leaving."

" On Sunday is the great departure from here, seventy-two people."

From day to day the last words were said, the last acts accomplished rapidly and anxiously. In the hotels the crowd surged round the telephone boxes impatiently waiting its turn to telephone to Zurich, or Geneva, or Basle, giving orders, changing itineraries and instructions, receiving affirmative, or adverse replies. The crowd surged in the roads at the doors of the five or six banks, to withdraw the balance of their last letters of credit, to send away their last sum of money ; they surged from shop to shop, to buy the last pretty and useful things from the Engadine, and the last souvenirs of St. Moritz and the Grisons, to take away for relations and friends ; they surged at the post office to expedite the last registered letter, to stamp the last picture post cards, to send the last telegrams. But the crowd surged more or less compactly, with one object only in every place, from the little wooden gallery where the music plays in the morning, near the " Kurhaus," to the larger gallery at the new springs by the " Stahlbad," while the serenade from *Pagliacci* resounded sadly ; they surged

from the *confiserie* of De Gasparis to the tea-rooms of the "Kulm," from the pastry shop of Hanselmans to tea at the Golf Club, as they came and went on foot or tram, with the single idea of looking for friends to say good-bye to them. Every moment at these and other places, beneath the beautiful porticoes of the Bad, at the Inn bridge, before the vestibules of the hotels, on the footpaths of the Dorf, at the carriage door, there were meetings, little cries of joy, feigned sighs, greetings and leave-takings.

" . . . I will look you up."

" . . . Of course I will come."

" . . . We leave this evening."

" . . . At Paris within three weeks."

" . . . To-morrow at Lucerne, on Tuesday at Geneva."

" . . . At Varrenna, on the 15th of September."

Early in the morning horses pawed the ground and tinkled their little bells before the main doors of the hotels, to warn those who were to descend in special carriages to Italy. Before the post office, the ordinary and special post-carriages were drawn up in a line, one behind the other, while postilions busied themselves around them, and porters continuously sought out and piled up fresh luggage on the carts which followed the carriages. Everywhere there was a rapid movement, a great hurrying of those who were setting out at this early hour, who had few friends and acquaintances and an indescribable anxiety to get away, speeded at the hotel door only by the very sleepy under-secretary, speeded at the post office merely by the under-porter, leaving without companions and without flowers, hurriedly, securing themselves in their carriages and settling themselves comfortably, without a glance at the country they were leaving, without a farewell as they went on their way. Amidst the cracking of postilions' and coachmen's whips and the tinkling of bells they went

on their way tranquilly and serenely, now that they had started for the Maloja, the Val Bregaglia—and Italy.

The others set out in carriages, much later, towards Italy, at ten or eleven, those who were in an immense hurry to fly, but who had to take leave of so many people in the hotels, greet so many friends on the square, return thanks and accept and render homage, receive flowers, give *bonbonnières*, all with an increasing anxiety which worldly politeness did not succeed in concealing, with a joyful excitement which was hidden by a false regret, as if to console those who were still remaining for two or three days, and who had no need of consolation, since they in their turn would leave. So on one side and the other words of farewell tried in vain to be sorrowful, though as a matter of fact the lady who was about to leave was secretly glad that she was being surrounded by this homage for the last time, and the man was secretly glad to be rid of another of his relations in the high mountains. The husband for private reasons, good and bad, was glad to be going elsewhere, and the children were at the height of joy and mischief, as was the case every time they changed ground. A little crowd surrounds the carriage; hats are lifted once more, the horses spring forward: the travellers wave their gloved hands, veils flutter, bells tinkle, and they are away over the Inn bridge, towards the Maloja, the Val Bregaglia, and Italy. Other carriages are with them which have arrived from the Dorf hotels, Campfer, Silvaplana, and Sils, and all unite to form a cortège of noisily rolling carriages, of trotting horses, cracking whips, tinkling bells, fluttering veils, without any of those who were on their way giving a glance to the mountains, lakes, and meadows that they are leaving behind them, without any act of farewell for the things around them.

Those who had just taken leave of them, bringing flowers and gifts with a wish for a pleasant journey,

would remain for a few minutes to talk quietly without the least melancholy, afterwards to disperse among the ever less frequented roads of the Bad. They went to see about their final affairs, for within a day or two they, too, would be far away. Many were getting ready for the principal trains leaving that day or on the morrow—the two daily expresses whose departure from St. Moritz Dorf took place amidst the terrible hurrying of the crowd, which at last left for all the countries of the world. Away, away, they went from the Upper Engadine without a glance or a nod of farewell—for the train pierced two tunnels in succession and was immediately at and beyond Samaden—already *distract* and forgetful, already anxious and longing for another life elsewhere, where their fantasies, nerves, and feelings should have other visions, other impressions, and other sensations.

Carriages and omnibuses arrived at a sharp trot from St. Moritz Bad and St. Moritz Dorf, full of people who were turning their backs with such hurry and furor. The pretty, clean little station was groaning with people, was heaped with piles of enormous luggage, and amidst ladies, men and children waved baskets and bunches of flowers, baskets of fresh fruit tied with ribbons and bows, large *bonbonnières* of Swiss chocolate—all gifts and souvenirs for those who were leaving from those who, impatient, were secretly waiting the brief flight of the hours to go in their turn. Ah, these accompaniments of flowers and gifts, what a last essay of worldly rivalry! What a steeplechase between Madame and Miss, each hoping to have more than the other, more than their dearest friend and dearest enemy, hoping to be surrounded by the most followers at the station—by a really big group, while the others should have only five, or six, or eight, but no more. It was a profitable business in these last few days for the florists, confectioners, and vendors of souvenirs. There were retinues of bouquets,

of baskets and bunches of flowers amongst the crowd at the little station, flowers wrapped in wrappings of tissue paper were held in the hands of ladies, children, and maids, an occasional bunch pressed to the bosom, the most precious of the bundle of flowers! Ah, how the ladies who were leaving counted them! How they paled with envy the day on which the Marquise de Vieuxcastel left, as they counted, astonished and irritated, the flowers in a hundred shapes that followed her in a floral crown, accompanied by friends, relations, and servants—the Marquise who was Grace personified, to whom all the ladies gave forty-five or fifty years and all the men thirty; nevertheless, she was full of beauty and youth from the depths of her beautiful young soul. And what deep anger on the part of little Madame d'Allart, when at the station she perceived that at least four of the bouquets she expected were missing, while, as a matter of fact, the pale, blond, reserved and thoughtful Comtesse de la Ferté Guyon had more than she—the tower of ivory! the tower of ivory to whom no one dare pay court! And what grotesque anger on the part of Madame Mentzel, who arrived at the station with but five followers and seven bouquets of flowers, one of which she had bought herself, at the sight of floral garlands that were clasped on all sides by the crowd, by all these ladies of the "Palace," even by the Comtesse Pierre de Gerard, *la grande Comtesse*, the noble lady of the self-conscious and almost statuesque posings, with a face that seemed almost that of a Sphinx, pure, ardent, and silent. Although she was considered the proudest and most distant of that assembly, even she was surrounded by friends, and Madame Mentzel went about exclaiming, from one end to the other of the little station, that unfortunately all her friends had left before her.

Even in their departure these ladies of the "Palace" were created to exasperate and annoy those from other

hotels—all the poor profane ! They left—these Olympians—with an even more Olympic air than usual, with a contempt that was totally *distrain*, with a serene pride, so much so that it seemed as if a cloud, mythologically speaking, should bear them away and not a trivial train. Each had thirty or forty packages to which the railway and railway people servilely gave preference. They had reserved carriages and saloons for themselves alone. Madame Azquierda was followed by eight or ten servants, who carried a hundred things into her reserved carriage—pillows, her bridge table, her table to prepare lunch, a bird-cage of thirty rare birds : Madame de Aguilar travelled with two English detectives to watch over her jewels and took with her four guests whom she was transporting to the shores of the North Sea, even to Heligoland, where her yacht of two thousand tons, *La Gitana*, would take them, together with other guests, for a cruise in the North Sea. In fact, these Olympian ladies of the " Palace," as if to damn the profane, were leaving for, shall we say, the most unexpected countries ; none of them, just to be different, were making for the usual, banal places. One was going to Munich to hear a cycle of Mozart's works ; another was going to England and the Scotch lakes, another to Bruges la Morte ; another was going to Umbria, to Perugia ; another in automobile to Bohemia—each to a strange place, for strange reasons, through artistic, literary, or æsthetic snobbishness, or perhaps—*perhaps*—through real taste, but certainly they were making a different journey, looking for a different atmosphere, sighing after different impressions. In fact, Madame Lawrence, whom many had dubbed a Jewess, who never went to church, to do something odd, was going on a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Lourdes. Biting her lips, Donna Mercédès de Fuentes, after inquiring from everyone, learnt that no one from the " Palace " was coming with her to Lucerne for *la*

grande semaine. It was enough to drive one mad, and only Don Giorgio Galanti could console her a little on the day of departure, for he had left over a little bunch of four splendid roses—how one knows not—that had found no billet ; he offered them to her, so she arranged a meeting with him for October in Paris at the Elysée Palace.

But in spite of the Olympian disdain of the ladies at the station the hour of departure, with the crowd that thronged more densely, grew vertiginous. Waves of movement in every sense passed over the crowd : a noise first dull, then higher and higher, became a deafening din, amidst the crashing of carts, the rumbling of baggage, the thousand voices and calls, the arrival of fresh carriages and unloading of fresh luggage, and over all was the invincible anxiety to clamber into the train, to close the eyes, to be transported far, far away from the Engadine, not even putting the head out to see how everything was disappearing to right and left, as if now the Engadine were a dream that was over, as if it had never been either reality or dream.

The sky was of a sapphire blue—of the deep sapphire of the east—over the Engadine, liquid gold was the sun, like limpid rock crystal the atmosphere, like ambrosia the air, the dawn pink with a thousand rosy tints, the noontide trembling with light and heat, the twilight of a thousand shades of purple, and the nights palpitated indescribably with stars, as never before. Amidst such splendour and softness its roads were thinned of passers-by, and no longer clouds of dust arose ; the paths and little white tracks amongst the immense meadows were no longer crossed except by few people, and for hours and hours by no one. The little donkeys with their red plush saddles, which had taken ladies and children for outings and excursions, had disappeared from the square before the public gardens ; slowly donkeys and drivers

had taken the Bernina road to return to Vallettina. Before the Kursaal of the Maloja the Comese boats of the lake of Sils had been beached ; the electric launch on the lake of St. Moritz had ceased its trips, and was drawn up to its winter garage ; the gondoliers had gone with their gondolas to Italy. One day the music played no more in the little wooden gallery by the Hôtel Kurhaus, another day there was no music in the great gallery at the "Serpentquelle," and gradually the musicians began to gather together, to pack their luggage, and set off for the Italian lakes and Milan. Some of the shops of the Bad closed towards the end of August ; the kiosks for jewellery, lace, and flowers lowered their iron shutters and all Tiraboschi's coachmen hurried to leave with their horses by easy stages towards Italy, Lombardy, Piedmont, and the French frontier, to arrive after a couple of months at Nice and Monte Carlo, where they would do service for the greater winter season. Gradually waiters and chambermaids, major-domos and grooms left, and there remained but the staff, which, within a week or ten days, would also have disappeared. At certain hours of the day there was a deep silence ; no longer at night did the "Kulm," the Grand Hotel, the "Palace," the "Schweizerhof," flame with their lights reflected in the lake, but only a feeble, flickering light threw some slender spark thereon. A great peace, not melancholy, now spread over the Upper Engadine ; a solemn calm stretched to its farthest borders. Above mountains, fields, lakes, in almost deserted country roads, solitude and silence was enhancing the beauty of the Upper Engadine—its incomparable, intangible beauty.

During the last week the little affairs of love and passion, of big and little flirts, had strangely changed in aspect and substance. Nearly all had become more intense, as if the imminent separation had caused their

modest flames to flash forth, rendering more serious and sad the gay caprice of a month. Every morning in the pine woods, full of the freshest perfumes, in the little paths one met nothing but amorous couples, some silent and slow, with lowered eyes, some rapid and agitated in their conversation, and on the seats in the little woods, and by the lake only flirting couples were to be seen, some melancholy, and contemplating with distracted eyes the even more solitary landscape, others exchanging long, significant glances. In front of the windows of Faist's library, amongst the Sorrento woods and tortoiseshell of Pasquale Gallone, at florists', at kiosks where the picture post cards were on sale, these couples of every age and nation and condition stopped to look for a book, buy a little present, exchange bouquets of flowers and post cards, pressing their hands suggestively, after a sentimental exchange. But these meetings and exchanges of little pledges happened at all hours till late at night, even in the vestibules, halls, and *salons* of the large hotels. There was not a corner unoccupied, not a divan that did not accommodate two persons, not a table at which two heads were not bent, while a gold pencil or silver pen raced rapidly over the page of an open volume, on the white pages of a volume of souvenirs. Heads were raised, a long, melancholy, and passionate glance between the twain expounded the motto, the name, and the date. There was now less dancing in the ballrooms, and only a few courageous couples gyrated to the last tunes of the orchestra; but the love-making increased even more, couples sat side by side, always conversing in a low voice, heeding not the calls of the "Boston" and "two-step." Couples were in the embrasures of windows and verandah, or promenading in the farthest corridors or before the buffet, drinking together a drink of the same colour, each eating a pastry of the same shape; couples withdrew to the *salon*, the billiard and reading

rooms, pretending to interest themselves in things they saw not ; only to get far away. Wherever one could take a cup of tea, in hotels, *cafés*, restaurants, above at the *Unteralpina*, below at the *Meieri*, everywhere pairs of flirts were seated at the tables ; and the tea smoked invitingly and in vain in the cups which the absent and absorbed couples forgot to sip. Everywhere mothers and fathers, relations and tutors, as with final complacency they thought that to-morrow, perhaps, all would be over, and not wishing to sadden the last days, pretended more than ever to see and know nothing, not to be aware of anything or understand. They were the last concessions of maternal indulgence, which preferred not to exalt or exasperate the last meetings, the last glances and hand-claspings.

In glances and words, in scribbled mottoes and hand-squeezes, in some fleeting kiss exchanged at the back of a deserted room, behind the pages of a large illustrated paper or the hedge of the tennis court, there was always a promise and an oath of eternal love and fidelity. Who did not promise ? Who did not swear ? The Comtesse di Durckheim, the eccentric Hungarian, smiling bitterly on the last day, told her women friends that she was bound by an everlasting oath to five of her suitors, and that she had given them tryst in five different countries, while she herself would go to a sixth country in search of an unknown lover—*l'inconnu, ma chère amie, l'inconnue, celui que j'aime toujours plus que les autres*. Lia Norescu had given at least ten promises and received ten solemn oaths—the astonishing girl with a soul full of ashes and poison—but as a matter of fact she left with only one flirt, an elderly, wealthy gentleman, who, perhaps, would have married her, but she was subtle and elusive, and would not let herself be taken ; another flirt, a youth whom she liked very much, was waiting for her at Ostend, a handsome youth, who pretended to be rich, but *que*

faire? Don Giorgio Galanti, the fascinating, astute Italian, had sworn eternal fidelity to numerous flirts at the Bad, the Dorf, and Pontresina ; but he went to join an enchanting woman whom he loved at the Semmering, near Vienna, and who loved him, but who could only meet him two or three times a year for a single day at a time, in far-away and different districts, a real romance, which he concealed beneath his cynical aspect of *viveur*. The Marquise d'Allart, small, exquisite, gracefully corrupt, believing neither what was told her nor what she said, gathered promises and took oaths in a half-pretty and sentimental tone, with a veil of melancholy in her voice ; and later, when alone in her room, full of little gifts and flowers, when she was to sleep her last night in the Engadine, she laughed cruelly at herself and others, showing her fierce little teeth to her mirror.

Madame Lawrence, indifferent, unfeeling, listened to promises and oaths, and gathered them with an expressive smile, but she made none in exchange as now and then she uttered some banal word, perhaps purposely insipid. Once again her suitors and flirts were indignant at her want of feeling, and some of them took their leave, deciding not to run after her or to see her no more ; others, though angry, believed that time and other encounters and opportunities would pierce the heart of this woman who was too beautiful, and disguised their feelings. The other professional beauty, the divine Miss Miriam Jenkyns, was even more terrible in her indifference, since she tranquilly rejected promises and oaths, declared against the inutility of the lies, and the vacuity of these sentimental forms, and beautiful, imperturbable, Olympian, but perhaps hugging to her heart a secret that was torturing and killing her, she discouraged, repressed, and settled all her suitors and flirts, carrying her mystery behind her pale, pure brow.

Who did not promise ? Who did not swear ? Amidst

sylvan perfumes, along the shores of the lakes, amidst the fields where the last flowers of summer still bloomed, in flower-clad gardens, in ballrooms, in reading-rooms, in solitary terraces, on white verandahs where the moon was contemplated, more especially on the last evening and morning, at the last moment, before a carriage whose horses were pawing the ground impatient to start, before the closing doors of the train, lovers, flirts, and suitors, a little pale, a little moved, promised in a low voice, made oath subduedly even if convinced they were lying ; even if cynical they were moved. Here and there one was deeply moved, taken and conquered, by pure sentiments and a sincere love.

On a clear morning the handsome youth, the tall, blond, elegant Pole, Ladislaus Woroniecki, with the dreamy eyes, left for his own country ; he was in love with the beautiful, fragile invalid, Else von Landau, who was remaining in the Upper Engadine, having decided to live and grow well, and who would remain there for a year or two. She had accompanied him to say good-bye at the station, and the two held each other's hands without caring for the public. Their loving eyes spoke a true promise, and a true oath, which they would maintain.

Miss Ellis Robinson was leaving for Paris, the charming American old maid of forty ; her Italian flirt, the gracious Don Carlo Torriani, who had followed her with courteous obstinacy, besieged her with lively but sincere court, striving to make her renounce her part of *vieux garçon*—this Italian lover—" *le beau Torriani beau pour moi,*" as she smilingly spoke of him—suddenly understood that as she promised him to return soon to Italy, certainly in November, promising him "*d'y penser un peu . . . à cette chose . . . seulement un peu,*" as she smiled no more, as she looked at him seriously, that the charming old maid of forty would keep her vow. Vows

and promises which were true, vows and promises which were half true, and vows and promises which were false, each man and woman uttered them on those last clear nights and limpid mornings—cynics, sceptics, indifferents, ingenuous, or impassioned, all felt a dull agitation disturbing them, all tried in vain to control themselves and to laugh and smile. Only those who had had a caprice, a flirtation, a little affair of passion, or love, those who had known how to play with love or whom love had mocked, those who had been chained for a short time, or those who were chained for ever, they only, even the most sceptical and most superficial—and much more so those with feeling heart and soul—experienced the sharp bitterness of having to leave that country, were pierced by the nostalgia for all they were abandoning, and turned to gaze at for the last time, to smile at and bless for the last time the Upper Engadine.

Divine Engadine, beloved, adored, blessed by all those who have discovered the face of love and perhaps of happiness. While the pleasure-seekers forgetfully left her without regret, seeking other surroundings with other pleasures, with an inextinguishable thirst that inundated the hearts and souls, while the snobs left without understanding anything, diseased with snobbishness as they were, and anxious to find other circles where they could abandon themselves to their ridiculous infirmity; while the vicious and corrupt fled, shrugging their shoulders, annoyed, in fact, because they had been unable to develop, as they believed and hoped, their vice and corruption; while the indifferent, from whom everything glides away, left without an impression or a recollection, while all those pleasure-seekers, snobs, the vicious, corrupt, and indifferent were dragged along by the same vortex to live elsewhere the same life, while for all of them the magnificent beauty of things and the majesty of the deserted heights had been useless and vain—only

those who had loved, for a day, for an hour, for ever in the Engadine, took her away with them in their hearts as a sweet, ineffaceable memory. They delighted in her as the country of their dearest poesy, they shut her up in their fantasy, as the purest of their dreams, they blessed her in the name of their love. The divine Engadine had offered all her most precious treasure to them, even to those seized by a light caprice, even to those transported by a little flirtation in a summer night in the high mountains, even to lovers' tears, even to those who must forget everything at once : the divine Engadine had given to those men and women all her dearest gifts. Divine Engadine ! Her winding paths amongst the soft verdure of the meadows had felt the light steps of lovers who had gone along them in forgetfulness of every other human thing ; her shady paths amid the salient woods had given their odoriferous freshness to the couples which had traversed them, holding arm or hand ; the small singing waters of the brooks hidden amidst grass and rocks had murmured to lovers' ears the music of gaiety and caress ; the great, motionless, and shining waters of the lakes had opened before the rocking boats which bore the lovers ; had brilliantly reflected the faces of those who had curiously gazed into them from the bank ; and the lofty mountain had gathered the more daring, who, in joyous desire of peril, bore their love up there, towards the white and terrible peaks. All her favours—light, flowers, and perfumes—the Upper Engadine had conceded to those who loved her. She had only been beautiful, pure, luminous, the fount of health and life to her old admirers of half a century, of thirty and twenty years, and one of them she had pressed to her bosom for ever in a mortal embrace ; only to the humble sick who had come there to seek peace, solitude, and strength. And for those who would never return again, in spite of their nostalgia, as for those

who would return the following year, in sentimental pilgrimage, the Upper Engadine remained for them, with all her precious treasures and admirable gifts, a country of well-being and dreams ; and later, they, on hearing her name or seeing her outlines on a post card, or hearing mention of some high peak, would experience a tremor of inconsolable regret.

Thus in these last days they were passing together in the Upper Engadine, Mabel Clarke and Vittorio Lante, in spite of the happy certainty of their love and future, in spite of the fact that they were going thence together to Paris, where Mrs. Annie Clarke was feverishly anxious to arrive, requiring a stay of at least six weeks there for all her dresses and hats—thirty dresses and sixty hats for herself and daughter—before setting out for America ; in spite of the certainty that in New York the great parent, the great John Clarke would at once consent to the marriage of his daughter with Don Vittorio Lante, Prince of Santalena (there was the title in the family), because John Clarke loved his daughter, and would, like every good American, respect her wish ; in spite of all that was smiling on their youth and troth, every now and then they looked at the country where they had known each other, where they had grown fond of each other, and a light cloud obscured their eyes. Their young nerves vibrated with the fullness of life, and absorbed the deep pleasure of being young, healthy, and of loving : but in the presence of the places where their stay in the high mountains had unfolded itself, in its episodes, now gay, now sentimental, they experienced a feeling of unexpected melancholy. Mabel Clarke did not want Vittorio to love her too much *all' italiana*, as she said, that is, with currents of vague melancholy, with mysterious languors, obscure currents of sadness which characterise Italian love ; she did not like that—the frank, lively, American girl, all expansive-

ness, and without secret corners in her heart or secret thoughts in her mind. But every now and then she was dragged down into that soft, sentimental whirlpool. If they passed before the English library of the Dorf, where they had met the first time ; if once again they crossed the wood of Charnadüras where, a trifle jestingly, they had spoken the first words of love ; if they renewed the walk round the lake where one day he had expressed more vigorously and ardently the fascination by which she subdued him ; if for a moment they gazed into the dark but limpid night from the balconies of the "Palace," with its memories of other nocturnal contemplations ; if on the return from the Maloja they noticed from the carriage the sunset girdle with its veils Crestalta and Villa Story ; if they saw again a turn of the road, a corner of a room—the slow whirlpool of amorous sadness engulfed them both. They mourned for the Engadine which they would shortly leave, they even mourned for her when jesting and smiling at St. Moritz Dorf station, whence they left together, and where the departure of Mrs. Clarke and her daughter caused a bustle, anxiety, and despair in all ; where all the friends and acquaintances had come to provide them with a triumphal departure, with cheers and good wishes—they mourned for the Engadine although they were going towards their happiness. While the train entered the tunnel opposite the foaming white cascade of the Inn, Mabel Clarke extricated herself from the slow mental whirlpool, and said to Vittorio Lante :

"We shall never love each other in another land as we have in the Engadine."

"In Italy," he replied, serene and confident.

"Ah, in Italy," she murmured, a little drearily.

Lilian Temple and Lucio Sabini had prolonged their stay in the Engadine through all that charming first week of September, which had rendered the beauty of

the country more intense and penetrating. As by an enchantment it had held them bound, in forgetfulness of all other surroundings.

Every day the peace and silence increased around them, and on them the enchantment worked more profoundly. When Lilian timidly spoke of their departure she saw Lucio's face disturbed with mortal sadness. She became silent, and remained yet a day, and again another ; while Miss Ford waited, calm and patient. At last, one day, the 6th of September, Lucio asked permission to accompany the two ladies on a visit they proposed making, after leaving the Engadine, to Berne, to old Berne, the historical, true Swiss city, whither go neither worldlings nor snobs, but where it is possible to pass two or three days of tranquillity in touch with an ancient world of art and poesy. He asked hesitatingly, trembling at the fear of a refusal, to be allowed to accompany them still further, to Basle, where they wished to stop again, to grey Basle, where Hans Holbein left his best pictures, and where Nietzsche taught philosophy. And nothing had been more torturing for him than the moment in which he waited for the reply of the two ladies, although the reply came rapid, frank, decisive, and affectionate, filling him with joy which he knew not how to conceal, which he read in Lilian's eyes and smile, like his own. So from that land where they had arrived from different countries and directions, with different souls and hearts, from that land where destiny had strangely brought them together, with hand clasped in hand they left together, as if they were to journey thus all their lives. Now and then Lilian's eyes were fixed on the horizon of mountains towering towards the sky, but they seemed to see nothing, being absorbed by their interior vision ; Lucio Sabini saw nothing except the dear face and dear person of Lilian beside him, and only a confused regret in the depth of their hearts, just a little

gnawing sorrow possessed them on the morning they left with Miss May Ford for Berne.

On the morning of departure it was already calmer at the station, because the crowd had now fled in every direction, by every line, because silence reigned in the valleys and in the two little villages of St. Moritz ; because only those remained who were allowing themselves some days of calm and comfort before leaving for the large, stifling, noisy cities. Silently, and a little pale, Lilian followed with quiet steps her two travelling companions, who were busy with the details of departure. She was wearing a thick white veil, and as on the evening of the dance at the " Kulm," she had in her hand three white roses which Lucio had given her as a souvenir. Silent and pale, she got into the train and stood as she watched to see if Lucio were following ; pale and silent she sat in a corner by a window, watching the hill of the Dorf and the plain of the Bad below, and the beautiful lake that unites them on its banks. Her friend and companion seated herself in another corner, and opened a large English newspaper, while Lucio silently settled the luggage. With a feeble whistling the train departed and entered the tunnel along the gloomy gorge of the Inn ; but Lilian still kept her head turned to the window, a little bowed. Uncertain and embarrassed by the presence of May Ford, Lucio had not dared to approach Lilian ; but at last, unable to resist, he drew near to her, calling her twice, and touching her hand and the roses, and then he perceived that the roses were bedewed with tears. He bent towards her ear and said in a firm voice :

" Lilian, you mustn't cry ; you mustn't suffer."

Simply and courageously she ceased to weep, smiled a moment, and replied :

" That is true. I musn't cry and I mustn't suffer."

CHAPTER XVIII

IN the rather gloomy ante-chamber, papered as it was in old green myrtle, and austere furnished in dark carved wood, the electric light was lit, but shaded by a milky, opaque globe. Francesco, the valet, silent, discreet, correct as usual, helped his master, Lucio Sabini, to take off his coat and freed him of hat, stick, and gloves. Lucio entered with a more than ever tired and bored appearance, with a pale and contracted face. In a quick, colourless voice he asked :

" Are there any letters ? "

" One ; I put it on the small table."

Lucio Sabini experienced a fleeting hesitation before he entered his own apartment, which was a vast room where the shade of dusk was spreading from three broad windows, two of which looked out on the Lungarno Serristori and the third on to a little square, so that the dark red, green, and maroon of the roomy, deep furniture—arm-chairs and sofas in English leather—merged into the single tint of shadow, and mixed with the mahogany, with an occasional gilt fillet, of the large bookcases and big and little tables. Here and there only the whiteness of a china vase, the gleam of a silver figure, the brightness of a statue of Signa's were to be distinguished. But in spite of the gloom which the dying day at the end of February caused in the room, the oblong envelope of the letter shone clearly.

Slowly he advanced amongst the furniture, making for a large arm-chair behind the writing-table, without lifting his eyes from the whiteness of the letter. He threw

himself into the chair, overcome, holding the letter before him without touching it—and some minutes passed thus. Suddenly he gave a start, sat up in his chair, put his hand on a switch, and the electric light was lit in three or four large lamps. Without touching it he saw that which he had guessed in the half light, Lilian Temple's writing and the envelope without a stamp.

"She is here . . . she is here——" he stammered, growing very pale, and speaking aloud.

His twitching hands touched the letter, but still without opening it: beneath the envelope he found a long, narrow visiting-card. The card said: "*Miss May Ford*," and in fine handwriting in pencil: "Will return." He let his head sink on the arm of the chair as he held the card in his fingers, which almost let it fall, and lapsed into thought for some moments in the silence of the room. Mechanically he rang the bell and started on seeing Francesco almost immediately before him on the other side of the desk.

"This letter was brought by hand, wasn't it?" he murmured, looking at the servant as if he saw him not.

"Yes, Excellency. It was left with the visiting-card."

"By whom?"

"By a lady, Excellency."

"A lady . . . was she young?"

"No, Excellency."

"Was she alone?"

"Alone, Excellency."

"At what time?"

"At four o'clock."

"And what did you tell her?"

"That your Excellency usually returned about half-past six and nearly always went out about eight to dinner."

"Ah!" exclaimed Lucio Sabini.

With a gesture he dismissed the man. Scarcely was he

gone when Lucio rose, a prey to a vain agitation ; he went up and down the room as if seeking something he found not, but without really looking for it ; he gazed around with dazed eyes, as if to question the farthest corners of the vast room, he stumbled against some piece of furniture without being aware of it, and touched two or three objects without seeing them, replacing them where he had found them. Inevitably he returned to his writing-table, his glance settled on the closed envelope without the stamp, over which spread Lilian Temple's large, flexible handwriting.

"She is here . . . she is here——" he exclaimed desperately. Twice he took the letter, turned it over, made as if to open it with a rapid, despairing gesture ; the second time he threw it down on the table as if it burnt him. He passed into the adjacent room, his bedroom, and turned on the light. The room seemed rather gay with its bright and fresh-coloured Liberty silk, bright brass bed, fine lace curtains and *parières*, and the lacquered wood of soft grey. He made for a small desk, opened its largest drawer and drew it forth. It was full of Lilian Temple's letters, written on fine sheets of foreign paper, very voluminous in character, which were crossed horizontally and vertically. Beneath them a large envelope was hidden where surely would be a portrait, or perhaps several portraits, of Lilian Temple ; but quite in the front of the drawer there was a large bundle of unopened letters, like the one he had left on his writing-table in the *salotto*. With a slightly trembling hand he pushed back all the leaves which were issuing in confusion from their opened envelopes and passed them to the back, hiding especially the large wrapper with the photograph, from which he averted his eyes. He separated all the unopened letters, and counted them twice, as if he thought that he was mistaken. There were fourteen. Fourteen letters from Lilian Temple which he

had not opened : he looked at the one which seemed the oldest in date, and he seemed to read on the English stamp the date of the 26th of December. In three months Lilian had written him fourteen letters which he had not read, because he had not opened them ; and the last ones he had thrown away so rapidly without looking at them that he had not even the stamp or date of departure. For some moments he stood by the open drawer. An agonising uncertainty was to be read on his face : two or three times he made as if to take the closed packet of letters and open one, or some, or all of them ; but two or three times he hesitated and repented. At last he shrugged his shoulders roughly, pushed back the drawer and closed it. A dull noise at his shoulder made him turn round :

" Miss Ford is asking from the ' Savoy ' if Signor Lucio Sabini has returned, and if he can receive her at once," demanded Francesco.

" Did you reply that I had returned ? " asked Lucio, biting his lips a little.

" I replied that your Excellency had returned," said Francesco, " but nothing else."

" Say that I am expecting Miss Ford at once."

Dazed, he passed a hand over his forehead, as if wishing to resume the direction of his tumultuous thoughts : he strove to impress there an energy that should arouse his lost will. But his thoughts and will lost themselves in great tumult and disorder around this idea, these words :

" If *she* were to come too ; if *she* were to come with her."

Like an automaton he passed again into his room. With a rapid gesture he hid the unopened letter, the fifteenth, the last from Florence. He moved some chairs to occupy his hands ; for a moment he leant with his burning forehead against the glass of his bookcase, hiding

his face. But the sound of the bell in the anteroom startled him from his abandonment.

He jumped up, composed and tranquil, advanced to the door, and bowed deeply to Miss May Ford, who entered, announced by Francesco. Kissing the grey-gloved hand which the Englishwoman extended to him, he led her to a chair and sat down opposite her, turning his shoulders to the large lamp on the writing-table so as not to show his face. Dressed in grey with a black hat, Miss May Ford showed an imperturbable face, whence had escaped every expression of the amiability of a former time—a tranquil, cold, imperturbable face.

"Welcome to Florence, Miss Ford."

"How do you do, Signor Sabini? Are you quite well?"

"Yes—thanks."

"Have you been keeping well?"

"No," he murmured, "I have been indisposed for some time, for a month."

"Oh, dear," exclaimed Miss Ford, with a conventional intonation of regret. "I hope you are all right now."

"I am all right now, thanks," replied Lucio coldly, perceiving that she did not believe him.

They exchanged a rapid glance. He was the first, with an effort of will, to question her:

"Are you alone, Miss Ford?"

"How alone?" she asked, pretending not to understand.

"Isn't your travelling companion with you?" he asked, with difficulty suppressing his emotion.

"She is not with me," she replied coldly.

"Isn't she in Florence?" he asked again, unable this time to conceal his anxiety.

For a moment Miss Ford hesitated. Then she replied again:

"She is not in Florence."

" Ah," he exclaimed, with a deep sigh, " and where is she ? "

Miss Ford scrutinised him with a long glance : then she said :

" Don't *you* know where Lilian Temple is ? "

Beneath that glance, and at those words, he was lost and showed his loss. He stammered :

" I don't know : how could I know ? "

" But you ought to know," added Miss Ford, looking at him.

" That is true ; perhaps I ought to know," he replied, without understanding what she said.

" In her letters she always told you what she was doing, and where she was going," added the old maid, in a firm, precise tone.

" Yes," he replied, throwing her a desperate glance.

Miss Ford lowered her face behind her black veil and became silent, as if she were gathering together her ideas. Confronted with her, silent and convulsed, Lucio Sabini waited for her words, incapable of saying anything unless he were asked. Then she asked him calmly, with cold courtesy :

" Will you be so good as to answer a few of my questions, Signor Sabini ? "

He looked at her ; and his eyes, the eyes of a man who had lived, enjoyed, and suffered much, almost besought her to have mercy. She averted hers naturally and asked :

" Do you remember that you left us, Signor Sabini, on the 20th of September ? Do you remember that you told Lilian—the last words on the companion-way of the steamer as you were leaving—that you expected her soon, as soon as possible, in Italy ? "

What anguish there was in the man's eyes which were fixed pleadingly on the woman, as if to beseech her to spare him that cup ; what anguish as he bowed assent.

The Englishwoman continued coldly : " Afterwards she wrote to you very often from England. You replied promptly and often in long letters. Is that so ? "

" It is so," he answered, in a weak voice.

" I don't know Lilian's letters or yours. I know that you always wrote that you wished to see her again, that you would come to England or that she should come to Italy. Is that true ? "

" It is true," the man consented, weakly.

There was an instant of silence.

" Later," resumed Miss Ford, " you began to reply less frequently, and more curtly. At last you spoke no more of your journey to England nor of Lilian's to Italy."

" I spoke no more of it," he consented, with bowed head.

" Finally you ceased to write to Lilian. It is three months since you have written to her."

" It is three months," he said, like a sorrowful echo.

Miss May Ford made her inquiry with perfect composure and courtesy, without any expression manifesting itself on her face, without any expression passing into her voice. Only she kept her eyes on those of Lucio's, her limpid, proud English eyes, which spoke truth of soul and sought it in the sad, furtive eyes of Lucio Sabini.

" Then," resumed the Englishwoman, " as my young friend had no reply to her letters, and as I was here in Florence, she begged me to come and find you and to ask you for this reply."

" Have you come on purpose ? " he asked disconsolately. " Did you make the journey on purpose ? "

" Oh, no ! " replied Miss Ford at once, punctiliously. " Not on purpose ! I am here for my pleasure, and my friend sent me to you for an answer."

" But what answer ? Whatever answer can I give Lilian Temple, Miss Ford ? " the man cried, in great agitation.

"I don't know. You ought to know, Signor Sabini," she replied boldly. "An answer, I suppose, to her last letter."

"Which last letter? Which?"

"That of to-day: that which I brought you," concluded Miss Ford simply.

He leant forward for a moment in his chair, then fell back suddenly, overcome. And the sad confession escaped almost involuntarily from his lips:

"I haven't read it."

"You haven't read it, Signor Sabini?" asked Miss Ford, with her first, fleeting frown.

"I haven't read it," he again affirmed, with bowed head.

"Oh!" only exclaimed Miss Ford, in a tone of marvel and incredulity.

Lucio rose; with trembling hands he sought in his writing-table, took the closed letter and showed it to the Englishwoman.

"Here it is, untouched. I haven't read it; I haven't opened it."

"Why?" asked May Ford coldly.

"Through fear, through cowardice," exclaimed Lucio Sabini crudely.

Miss Ford was silent, with lowered eyes; her gloved hands grasped the handle of her umbrella. And Lucio, deciding to stretch, with his cruel hands, the wound from which his soul was bleeding, continued:

"Through fear and cowardice I did not open this letter to-day from Lilian Temple, as I have not done for nearly three months—please understand me—I have opened none. You do not believe me? It is not credible? I will fetch her letters."

Convulsively he vanished into the other room and reappeared immediately with the fourteen sealed letters and threw them into Miss Ford's lap.

" There they are. They are all I have received since December : I haven't read them, I tell you, nor opened them. It is abominable, but it is so ; it is grotesque, but it is so ! I am a man, I am thirty-five, I have seen death, I have challenged death, but I have never dared for three months to open a letter from Lilian. I have no longer had the courage. In fact, the abominable cruelty in not reading what she wrote me, the infamy and grotesqueness of not opening the envelopes, the ignoring of which I believed myself incapable, the cruelty for which I hate and despise myself, I have done through fear and cowardice and through nothing else. Do you understand me ? "

Slowly Miss Ford took the letters, one by one, read their addresses, and placed them one on the other in order. Raising her head, she asked, with great, even greater coldness :

" Fear ? Cowardice ? "

" Yes ! Through fear of the suffering caused to myself and others, through not wishing to suffer or know suffering, or see, or measure the sufferings of others."

" Suffering ? Sorrow ? " again asked the cold voice of the Englishwoman.

" I suffer like one of the damned, Miss Ford," he added gloomily.

" Ah ! " she exclaimed, with colourless intonation.

" And Lilian also suffers ! Isn't it true that she suffers ? "

" Yes, I believe she suffers," exclaimed Miss Ford, glacially.

By now she had made a pile of the fourteen sealed letters, and raising her head she said to Lucio Sabini :

" Must I take back all these letters, then, to my friend, so that she may see and understand, Signor Sabini ? Give me the last as well and I will go."

And she made as if to rise and depart with her pile of letters, without further remark.

"Then Lilian is here?" cried Lucio Sabini, drawing near to the English lady, again convulsed. "She is here. Tell me that she is here."

Miss Ford hesitated a moment.

"No, Lilian is not here," she affirmed tranquilly.

"Ah, if only she were here, if only she were here!" he cried, hiding his face in his hands.

"Would you look for her, Signor Sabini? Would you see her? Would you speak with her?"

As one in a dream he looked at the Englishwoman: and at each question his face, contracted by his interior anguish, seemed discomposed.

"No," he replied in a slow, desolate voice. "No, I would not seek her out; I would not see her; I would not speak with her."

"Ah!"

"I must never see Lilian Temple again," he added, opening his arms desolately.

"Never again, Signor Sabini?"

"Never again."

"But why?"

He made a despairing but resolute movement.

"I am not free, Miss Ford."

"You have a wife?" and the Englishwoman's voice seemed slightly ironical.

"No, I haven't a wife; but I am even more tied and bound than if I had one."

"I don't know; I don't understand," she said.

"One sometimes leaves and deserts a wife. A lover is much more difficult. Sometimes it is impossible. It is impossible for me: I am a slave for ever."

He spoke harshly and brutally; but as if he were using such harshness and brutality against himself. In the light dimmed by the shades, it seemed as if a slight

blush had spread over Miss Ford's pale face. The glaciality of her voice diminished : it seemed crossed by a subtle current of emotion, where also there was embarrassment, stubbornness, and pain. Miss May's questions were slower and more timid, more hesitating in some words, more broken with short silences, as if she had scarcely resumed the interrogation. Lucio's replies were precise, rough, gloomy, as if directed to a mysterious inquisitor of his soul, as if to his very own conscience.

" Isn't this person, this woman, free ? "

" She is another's wife. Together we have betrayed a man's confidence."

" Do you adore this woman ? "

" I adored her ten years ago. Now I adore her no more ; but I am hers for ever."

" Then you love her very much ? "

" I loved her with an ardent love. Now I no longer love her ; but I am her slave."

" Does she love you ? "

" She did adore and love me ; but now no longer. Though without me she could not live."

" Are you sure ? "

" I am sure. Beatrice Herz would prefer death to being deserted."

" But why ? " exclaimed the Englishwoman, moved at last.

" Because we committed the sin of adultery."

" Oh ! " she exclaimed, blushing furiously, and with a gesture that asked to be told no more.

" Ah, I beg your pardon, Miss Ford," exclaimed Lucio with a new exaltation, " I beg your pardon, if I offend your chastity and scandalise your modesty. But since you are here, Miss Ford, and since I shall not see you again, or again have before me a good, upright soul like yours, and since you will never again see the wretch before you, let me tell you, in the bitterest, most terrible words,

all my horrible misery ! Miss May, God is right, religion is right ; one must not commit adultery. He who commits this fascinating sin pollutes his life indelibly, destroys his happiness, sows ashes in his heart, and gathers the fruits of the Dead Sea and poison. One must not commit adultery. Ten years ago Beatrice Herz was so beautiful : I was so passionate ! The intoxication that joined us and exalted was so incomparable ! Ah, don't draw back, I beg of you ; listen to me to the end. I don't wish to exalt error, but blame it ; I wish not to raise up sin, but vilify it ; I do not wish to tell to myself, now too late, what an abomination was that fraud, what a shame that betrayal ; I only wish to cry out to others, unconscious, trusting blindly in themselves, what a death in love, what a death in life is adultery. We loved each other for a year, Beatrice and I ; but for this year we threw away our youth, our happiness, our liberty. A year of sin, Signorina, is a year of servitude, of misery, of shame. Ah, I have never so much cursed and execrated my sin as when Lilian Temple appeared to me."

May Ford trembled, and started : her attention seemed more intense.

"Lilian ! Lilian !" he exclaimed, rising, as if in a vision, as if holding out his arms to a phantom, "a creature of twenty, of rare beauty, all delicacy and grace ; a loyal heart, proud and sweet, like a precious treasure opened for me ; a loving, pure soul, a flower of freshness and virginity. Purity and candour, love and ardour together—Lilian ! Lilian ! To me this creature came full of every fascination ; to me she came with her eyes that in their blueness opened to me the way of heaven, with her lips that smiled at me and called me, with hands that were stretched out to me laden with every gift, her beautiful hands that wished to give me everything, even the very hands themselves ; to walk with her for ever, step by step, until death. Lilian !

Lilian ! You who came to me to be mine, you who were given to me by God, you who were mine—Lilian. . . . And I believed that I could deserve you, that I could have you ; Lilian, whom I gathered that you might be my bride, my companion, my good—so I believed."

Like a child, Lucio Sabini threw himself on a sofa, his head buried in his arms, as he wept and sighed.

Miss May Ford rose and went to him, but without bending or touching him, she said anxiously :

" Why are you crying ? "

He jumped up and raised his head, showing a face convulsed with grief and furrowed by tears.

" I weep because I have been deceived, because I am profoundly disillusioned ; because I deceived an innocent girl, because I lied to myself, in suddenly believing myself free to love and be loved ; because I erred, believing that there was still time to live, to live again—while it was too late."

" Too late ? "

" Yes. Sin has devastated me ; sin has reduced me to slavery. I am not worthy of freedom, of love—of Lilian."

" And what must *dear* Lilian do ? " And at the adjective Miss Ford's voice trembled for an instant.

" She must forget me. She must ! Tell her that I am too old for her at twenty ; that I am as arid as pumice stone ; that I have neither youth, nor health, nor strength, nor joy to offer her beauty, her fascination, and her goodness ; that I am no longer capable of love, or enthusiasm, or fidelity, or devotion. Tell her all that ! She must forget me—she must. I am a ruined, devastated, dead being ; nothing could arouse me. Tell her that ! Let her forget me ; let her forget the man who is undeserving of her, who has never deserved her ; let her forget the being who has scorched his existence at every flame ; let her forget the man who has neither

faith, nor courage, nor hope—let her forget me. Tell her who I am and what I am. Tell her even worse things, that she may forget me."

"She will not believe me," replied Miss Ford slowly. "Thus she did not know you in the Engadine."

"The man of the Engadine was a phantom," again cried Lucio excitedly. "He was a phantom, another myself, Miss May; another—he of ten years ago—of once upon a time, a phantom that felt itself born again, living again, having form and substance, blood and nerves, being full of immense hope and certainty. In that wondrous land, and beside a wondrous creature, in the presence of an indescribable beauty of things and the perfect beauty of a girl, amidst the flatteries of light, and air, and flowers, of the fragrance, glances, and smiles of a dear lady, that phantom had to become a man again, had to be the man of formerly, strong in sentiment, strong in desire, strong in the new reason for his life. He had to be; he had to be! Who would not have cancelled ten years of sin and slavery in an hour, in a minute, up there amidst everything lofty and pure, white and proud, beside a soul so pure and ardent as Lilian's? Who would not have been another being? Who would not have honestly believed he was another being? She knew a phantom—tell her that! He has vanished, with every false, fleeting form of life, with all his hopes and desires. The wretched phantom vanished in a moment."

"When?"

"On the pier at Ostend, while your boat, as it cleaved the mist, bore you back to England."

Exhausted, frightened, he fell back on the sofa, and scarcely breathed. Standing silently and thoughtfully, Miss May Ford seemed to be waiting for the last words. He raised his head. The tears were dried on his flushed cheeks.

"Tell her to forget me," he resumed in a hard voice,

"to fall in love with someone as young as she is, with an honest young Englishman, sane of spirit as she is ; with a young Englishman, loving and pure as she is. Let her fall in love with this Englishman, and marry him."

"I do not know if she can do that, Signor Sabini."

"Do you believe that she will not succeed in forgetting me ? " he asked, again in anguish.

"I do not know," she replied, shaking her head. "I do not know all the depths of her heart."

"Do you think she loves me very much ? That she loves me too much ? " he asked with emotion, taking her hands.

"I am ignorant as to how much she loves you. She has not told me. We don't discuss these things in England," added Miss Ford quickly.

"Six weeks together," he murmured thoughtfully, "only six weeks, and a girl of twenty. It is impossible for her to be too much in love with me."

"Let us hope so, if only we may hope so," replied Miss Ford.

"I hope so, I believe it ; it must be so. Lilian must be loved by another ; she must be happy with another, and forget her shadow of love in the Engadine, her phantom of the Engadine."

The colloquy was ended. The last words came from the lips of the quiet, good Englishwoman.

"Won't you now content my friend, Signor Sabini ? Won't you give me a reply to her letter ? To the letter I brought you to-day ? "

Uncertainly and anxiously he took the letter which remained abandoned on the writing-table. With a rapid movement he tore open the envelope. It contained the following few words in English :

"My love ; tell me if you ever loved me, if you still love me. I shall always love you.—LILIAN."

Lacio read aloud the few simple, frank words, the

tender question, the deep promise. And all the amorous life of the Engadine reappeared to him, in all its most intimate and invincible attraction. His whole soul reeled his heart broke.

"Tell her how much I loved her, Miss May; tell her how much I still love her; that far away and all the time I shall always be hers. Tell her that; it is the truth. I have never deceived her. That is the answer, the only answer."

Thus he besought May Ford, with anxious eyes and trembling lips, in a cry that arose from the innermost depths of his heart, that the cry might reach even to Lilian.

"I can't tell her that," replied Miss Ford gravely, "I will not tell her that."

"But why not; if it be the truth? Why not?"

"If I tell her, Signor Sabini, she can never forget you, she will never cease to love you. She must never know that you love her."

"Indeed, indeed!" he replied sadly, "and how could she ever understand, she who is innocent, simple, and pure, that I can love her and yet fly from her; that I can love her and remain with Beatrice Herz? That is my inexorable condemnation—Lilian can never understand."

"Signor Sabini, tell me the only thing necessary for her to forget; something short and convincing that can turn Lilian."

Miss Ford sighed, as if she had talked too much and expressed too much.

"One thing only, then," said Lucio Sabini firmly. "You shall tell her simply that a woman has been mine for ten years, that she has loved me very much, and keeps me as if it were her life itself, and that if I left her she would die. I remain with her so that she may not die."

"Must I say that she would die?"

"You must say that. If Lucio Sabini were to desert Beatrice Herz she would kill herself."

"She would kill herself ; very good."

Bowing composedly to Lucio, Miss May Ford turned her back and left with calm steps.

On the following day Lucio Sabini hovered round the precincts of the Savoy Hotel like a child, turning his back if he saw a carriage leaving or arriving, disappearing into a shop if he saw the omnibus full of travellers leaving, vanishing into an adjacent street whenever he saw a lady or two ladies leaving or entering. He did not see Miss May Ford either leave or enter at any time, and he dared not enter the vestibule of the hotel to ask if she had left, or were leaving soon. He ended by withdrawing, and almost flying from the neighbourhood of the hotel, where his soul indicated to him the presence of Lilian Temple. In the tepid, odoriferous hour of sunset, he went to the Cascine, drove, as every day, to the Viale Michelangelo, and at every carriage he met, in which from afar he seemed to perceive two ladies, he trembled, jumped up, and was about to tell his coachman to turn round. Those who greeted him in that sunset were not recognised by him ; she for whom he had sacrificed Lilian Temple waited for him in vain towards half-past six, for the very short daily visit which he paid her to take the orders for the evening. At nine in the evening he was beneath the portico of the Florence railway station, hidden behind the farthest of the columns which support it, watching the arrival of the travellers' carriages and hotel omnibuses for the departure of the express to Bologna and Milan in connection with the Gothard train for France. It still wanted three-quarters of an hour ; every five minutes he drew out his watch nervously. His eyes watched, in the obscurity, the corner of Santa Maria Novella, whence the carriages and omnibuses reach the station ; at some moments his

impatience had no bounds. However, he kept himself closely hidden behind the pillar with the collar of his overcoat raised, as if he were cold, and with the rim of his black hat lowered over his eyes ; only his eyes lived ardently within him, through his scorched soul, which waited, invoked, and knew that Lilian was about to appear. Twice Miss Ford had denied Lilian's presence in Florence, but, like all Englishwomen who know not how to tell a lie, she had hesitated for a moment before pronouncing the lie. All Lucio's mind palpitated with the anxiety of waiting behind the pillar, because he was now sure that Lilian Temple would appear from one moment to another. Suddenly he felt himself wrapped in a double impetus of joy and sorrow, because Lilian Temple with Miss Ford had descended at fifty paces distance from him, from the omnibus of the Savoy Hotel. Seeing her, recognising and watching her, he heard a voice within him, speaking in his ear, as if a living being were speaking beside him, so much so that, frightened, he turned round as he heard the words, to seek whomsoever could have uttered them :

"Lilian loves you ; you love her. Take her in your arms, and fly with her."

Step for step Lilian followed her friend and guardian, May Ford, who was seeing to the details of departure, while they exchanged neither a word nor a nod. From his hiding-place behind the pillar, Lucio saw Lilian's slender, fine figure outlined in her black travelling-dress, that he knew so well, the travelling-dress she had worn when they left the Engadine together for Berne and Basle. From his hiding-place he saw Lilian's blond head beneath her black hat with the white feather ; but, owing to the distance, and the thick white veil she wore, as on that other journey when they left the Engadine, he could hardly make out her face. But neither in her hands nor at her waist was she carrying flowers as then :

her hands weakly held a little travelling valise and a slender umbrella. But she had no flowers. Seeing this, Lucio heard, like a whisper in his ears, the voice again telling him :

" She is leaving ; go with her."

The two English ladies now entered the long, narrow vestibule of the station, covered with glass, and disappeared from Lucio's eyes. He withdrew from the pillar, and began to follow them from a distance, as side by side, and without speaking, they went through the vestibule. From the distance it seemed to Lucio that now and then Lilian bowed her head on her breast ; but he could not observe very well, owing to the crowd that came between them. Miss Ford bought a book and a paper from the bookstall ; she was lost for a few moments as she chose them, while Lilian waited at a little distance, her face almost invisible behind her white veil, as she leaned with both her hands on the handle of her umbrella, as if she were tired. The ladies withdrew towards the first-class waiting-room ; Lucio followed them, keeping his distance. They did not sit down, and he kept behind the glass door, as he peeped inside. Lilian Temple's deep silence, even if she liked silence, even if the two companions were gladly silent, overwhelmed him, as being the sign of something mysterious that kept her closed within herself, since she was now incapable of telling anything of what she felt to anyone.

The two ladies noticing the opening of the doors for departure, went out on to the platform, and proceeded to the train, which was to take them to Milan, and thence to Chiasso, France, and England. When Lucio Sabini saw that the train was about to start, and that the two ladies were looking for their places from carriage to carriage, quietly and with determination, to leave and vanish from him ; when he understood that in a few minutes the dear young face would disappear in the shadow of

the night, without her having seen him again, without his farewell ; when he understood that she was going from him, spurned, refused, almost driven away by him, he trembled with sorrow, and almost with fear, for once again someone seemed to be speaking in his ear, but with an even more intense and mysterious voice :

" Don't let her leave alone ; go with her."

Constrained by this sorrow, by the fear which the interior voice was inflicting on him, he hurried his steps, and almost ran to reach the two ladies. But a flow of people crossed his path ; trucks full of luggage intervened. When he succeeded in surmounting the obstacles the two English ladies were already in their carriage. He halted at a little distance, where they could not see him, and observed that Lilian Temple was already seated behind the window. She was silent. She did not look at the bustle of the station, she gazed at nothing, she sought and expected no one. At last, beneath the great electric light, Lucio almost distinguished her face beneath the white veil. It was a composed face, with drooping eyes, but tearless, and perhaps without any expression of sadness ; a closed mouth, without smiles, but firm and calm in its lines. A great chill froze Lucio's heart, and rooted him to the spot, as he thought :

" She does not suffer ; she is resigned and tranquil."

He remained motionless as the doors were banged to and closed violently, while the orders for departure were transmitted briskly, and the locomotive whistled. Without stirring, he watched the train move, the carriage draw away where Lilian Temple sat, and the beloved face disappear behind the white veil. Then, in the suddenly empty station, when he was left alone, an immense bitterness invaded him, and bitterly he thought :

" She will forget me."

That other true voice of his conscience was silent and overcome.

CHAPTER XIX

ALL the morning, as every day, the bell of the entrance door of Vittorio Lante's pretty but modest apartments in Via de' Prefetti had done nothing but ring : and his housekeeper, his only servant, an old woman of very honest appearance, who had been settled with him by his mother, had done nothing but announce to her master the visits of the most diverse and strange people. This pilgrimage of friends, acquaintances, and strangers had begun directly after Vittorio had returned from Paris, in fact from Cherbourg, where he had accompanied his *fiancée*, Mabel Clarke, and his future mother-in-law, Annie Clarke, whence they had embarked on a colossal transatlantic liner. Scarcely had the newspapers announced, rather solemnly, the arrival of the Prince of Santalena, Don Vittorio Lante, who in the spring would depart for America, where would be celebrated, with marvellous sumptuousness, his marriage with Miss Mabel Clarke, than those apartments, usually calm and silent, had been invaded every day by people of all conditions and kinds. In December Don Vittorio Lante della Scala, whom everyone now complacently called the Prince of Santalena, although he had not yet been able to repurchase, shall we say, the right to bear this title, had gone to Terni to pass the feasts of Christmas and the New Year with his mother, Donna Maria Lante della Scala, who lived in great retirement in a few rooms of the majestic Palazzo Lante, and he did not return until the middle of January.

Again the oddest people, known and unknown, began

to overflow the small but elegant abode of Don Vittorio, and as winter declined to spring, the people arrived in increasing numbers and besieged Vittorio at home. They waited for him at the door and went to look for him in the *parloir* of his club, where he lunched and dined; they ran everywhere he was wont to repair. Each morning and evening bundles of letters arrived for him, some of which were registered and insured to the value of a thousand and two thousand lire. One day, in fact, he had a letter with a declared value of five thousand lire. And all, intimate and ordinary friends, old and new acquaintances, strangers and unknown, wrote him letters, sent him enclosures, forwarded him documents, attracted by the immense fortune he was about to possess in marrying Mabel Clarke with a dowry of fifty millions—and some said a hundred millions. All desired and wished, all asked from him, with some excuse or other, with one pretext or another, a little part, a big part, a huge part of this fortune which was not yet his, but which would be his within six, four, or two months.

One sought a loan on his return from the honeymoon, a friendly loan, nothing else, through the ties of old affection, giving no hint as to the date or manner of repayment; someone asked a serious loan with splendid guarantees and first mortgages; another wished to sell him the four horses of his stage-coach; another wished to give up to him his kennels, another a villa, a castle, a palace, a property, another wished him to redeem from the Government an island in the Tyrrhennian Sea to go hunting there; while another wished him to acquire a yacht of two thousand tons.

Every day to all this were added the visits of vendors of jewels, of linen, of fashions for men and women, of fine wines and liqueurs, wanting him to buy from them for fabulous sums, offering all the credit possible, to be paid for a year after the marriage, so that they might have the

honour of being his purveyors. To their visits and letters were added those of other strange beings, small and great inventors who asked much money to relinquish their inventions ; discoverers of wonderful secrets which they would reveal for a consideration ; girls who asked for a dowry to enable them to marry ; singers who asked to be maintained at the Conservatoire for two or three years, the time that was necessary to become rivals of Caruso ; widows with six sons who wished to lodge three or four with him ; people out of employment who would like to follow him to America when he went to marry ; other unemployed who asked for letters of introduction to John Clarke ; adventurers who compared themselves with him and wanted to know how he had managed to please a girl with fifty millions ; seamstresses who asked for a sewing-machine ; students who wanted him to pay their university fees. All this was done in fantastic alternation, sometimes honest, sometimes false, but often grotesque and disgusting ; for the saraband was conducted on a single note—money, which it is true he had not yet, as nearly everyone knew that he was poor, but that within six months or less he would have an immense fortune. In fact, some of the more cynical and shameless believed that he already had money, as if Mabel Clarke's millions, or million, or half a million, had already reached him as a present from the future father and mother-in-law, or from his *fiancée* herself. Indeed, an old mistress of a month asked for three thousand francs which she said would be of immediate use to her and which he could surely give her since he had so much money from America : in exchange she offered him some love letters which he had written her, threatening on the other hand to send them to his *fiancée* in America. He who had registered his letter to the value of five thousand lire sent him a copy of a bill of exchange of his father's, of thirty years ago, a bill which Don Giorgio Lante had never

paid ; and, as usual, the correspondent threatened a great scandal. During the first two months this strange assault at home, at the club, in the streets, in drawing-rooms, in fact everywhere he went, this curious assault of avarice and greed interested and amused him. He was supremely happy in those early days. He had taken leave of Mabel, certain of her troth ; Annie Clarke, the silent idol, had smiled on him benevolently from the deck of the liner, and he was sure that John Clarke would give him his daughter. At that time he received gracious letters—a little brief it is true—from Mabel, and still more often cablegrams—a form she preferred—of three or four words in English, always very affectionate : and he replied at once. He was supremely happy !

The human comedy, the human farce which bustled, not around him, but around the money he was going to possess, was at bottom somewhat flattering. He enjoyed all the pleasures of vanity which an enormously rich man can have, although still poor. His nature was simple and frank, his heart was loyal. He loved Mabel ardently and enthusiastically ; but the sense of power which he had for a short time came pleasantly to him. Therefore he was polite to all his morning and evening aggressors ; he refused no one a hearing ; he never said no. Only with a courteous smile he postponed to later any decision, till after the marriage or the honeymoon. Some sought for a bond or a promise in writing ; amiably and firmly he refused, without allowing him who was so persistent to lose all hope. Vittorio Lante was never impatient with all those who asked of him from fifty lire to five hundred thousand, sometimes smiling and laughing as he kept the most eccentric letters to laugh at them with Mabel in America, when they should have some moments of leisure. In these annoyances of wealth there was a hidden pleasure, of which for some time he felt the impressions keenly.

Then a cablegram of the 3rd of December, from New York, told him that John Clarke had consented. Intoxicated with joy he telegraphed to Mabel, to Annie, even to John Clarke, and left at once for Terni, to announce the glad tidings to his noble and gentle mother. Still soon some shadows began to spread themselves over his life ; light shadows at first and then darker. Like lightning the news of the betrothal of the great American millionairess with a young Roman prince had been spread and printed everywhere in all the European newspapers, and gradually there had begun witty and slightly pungent comments, then rather cutting remarks. Whoever sent the French, German, and English papers to him at Terni, to the Palazzo Lante, which first congratulated him ironically and afterwards, gradually complicating the news and redoubling the echoes, treated him as a broken noble of extinct heraldry, as a dowry-hunter, a seller of titles ; whoever sent these witty, impertinent, often directly libellous papers had marked in red and blue, with marks of exclamation, the more trenchant remarks. Implacably, while he was away from Rome, away from every great centre, in the solitude of his ancient palace—with what sarcasm the ruin of this palace had been described in the papers and the necessity for restoring it with Papa Clarke's money !—he received whole packets of these papers and in his morbid curiosity and offended feelings he opened all, devouring them with his eyes, and read them through, to become filled with anger and bitterness.

But if a tender letter from Mabel reached him at Terni, if she replied with a tender expression to a dispatch of his, his anger calmed and his bitterness melted. His mother saw him pass from one expression to another, but she was unwilling to inquire too closely. With a tender smile and gentle glance she asked him simply :

" Does Mabel still love you ? "

"Always, mamma," he replied, trembling with emotion at the recollection of the beautiful, fresh girl.

But new papers arrived and again his mind was disturbed with anger and sorrow. He would have liked to reply to them all, with denials, with violent words, with actions against those people of bad faith, against the villains who had published the news, who had printed the articles and paragraphs full of gall: he would have liked to have picked a quarrel with the paper, cuffed the journalist and fought a duel with him; he wished to fight a dozen duels, make a noisy scandal, and then reduce to silence those chroniclers of slander and calumny by giving true light to the truth of deeds. Then he hesitated and repented of it. He tore up the letter he had begun and exercised over himself a pacifying control. Was he right to reply to malignity, lies, and insinuations? Was it not better to shrug the shoulders, and let them talk and print, and smile at it all; laugh at the journalists and despise the journals? Would not Mabel Clarke, if she had been with him, have thought and decided so, the American girl without prejudices, free in ideas and sentiments, incapable of allowing herself to be conquered by conventionality and social hypocrisy? Then he repressed and controlled himself. But in the depth of his spirit now and then arose a second reason for silence: with increasing bitterness he told himself that some and many of the things had the appearance of truth, and that some of them, moreover, were true. He loved Mabel Clarke sincerely, but it was undeniable that it was a magnificent match for whomsoever married her, even if he were rich, and he instead was absolutely poor. Mabel loved him loyally, but she was the daughter of an American merchant and he was the heir of a great name, a descendant of a great family. Love was there, but barter in one way or another had all the appearance of existing, and did exist. The rest, it is true, was the

malignity, insinuation, and calumny of journalists ; but the barter was undeniable, even sanctioned by ardent sympathy. What was the use of writing, of lawsuits, of cuffing and provoking duels ? It were better to be silent and pretend to smile and laugh ; in fact, in a fury of pretence to smile and really laugh at all papers and journalists.

On reaching Rome during the first ten days of January he was consoled by a single thought against such infamies ; that Mabel on the other side might know little or nothing of them. Letters and telegrams continued to be always very affectionate : the marriage ought to take place in the middle of April, but John Clarke had been unwilling to fix a precise date. That exalted his heart and rendered him strong against everything that was printed about the nuptials : gradually now the papers became silent. But at home, where his aggressors repaired more than ever, to ask whatever they could ask from a man immensely rich, even they in the middle of their discourses, would let slip a phrase or an allusion, that they had read something and had been scandalised by it : how could rascals on papers nowadays be allowed to insult such a gentleman as he was—Don Vittorio Lante, Prince of Santalena as they knew him to be ?

At each of these allusions which wounded him, even in the midst of the adulations and flatteries of his interlocutors, he trembled and his face became clouded : he noted that everyone knew them and everyone had read them, that the calumnies had been spread broadcast in every set. Even at the club, now and then, someone with the most natural disingenuousness would ask him if he had read such and such a Berlin paper ; someone else, more friendly, would tell him frankly how he had grieved to read an *entre-filet* of a Parisian paper. Sometimes he would smile or jest or shrug his shoulders, and sometimes he showed his secret anger. His well-balanced, always

courteous mood changed ; sometimes he treated petitioners badly and dismissed them brusquely. Such would leave annoyed, murmuring on the stairs that as a matter of fact the European papers had not been wrong to treat Don Vittorio Lante della Scala as a very noble and fashionable adventurer, but still an adventurer. He passed ten restless days in which only Mabel's letters and telegrams came to calm him a little.

But he experienced the deepest shock when complete packets of American papers arrived for him, voluminous, and all marked with red and blue pencil, since each contained something about his engagement, his marriage, his nobility, and his family. In long columns of small type were spread out the most unlikely stories, most offensive in their falseness ; therein were inserted the most vulgar and grotesque things at his expense, or at the expense of Italy or Italians. It was a regular avalanche of fantastic information, of extravagant news, of lying declarations, of interviews invented purposely, of fictitious correspondence from Rome, and in addition to all this the most brutal comments on this capture of an American girl and her millions by another poor European gentleman, in order to carry away the girl and her money, and make her unhappy, to waste her money on other women as did all sprigs of European nobility, not only in Italy, but wherever they had managed to ensnare an American girl. Other marriages between rich American women and aristocratic but poor Europeans were quoted, with their often sad lot, conjugal separations, with their divorces, fortunes squandered in Europe, with their souls alienated from mother and father, and every American paper concluded that their daughters were mad and foolish again to attempt an experience which had always succeeded ill with them ; that this miserable vanity of becoming the wife of an English Duke, a Hungarian magnate, a French marquis or Italian Prince should be

suppressed. They should put it away: American women should wed American men and not throw away their fresh persons and abundant money on corrupt and cynical old Europe.

When he had read all this, Vittorio Lante was thoroughly unhappy. The papers were old, but there were some recent ones; the latest, those of ten or twelve days previously, breathed an even more poisonous bitterness. By now he had learned to speak English much better, and understood it perfectly; none of that perfidy, none of that brutality escaped him, and all his moral sensibility grieved insupportably, all his nerves were on edge with spasms, as he thought that Mabel Clarke, his beloved, his wife to be, had read those infamies from America, and had absorbed all that poison. He would have liked to telegraph her a hundred or a thousand words, to swear to her that they were all nauseating lies; but he repented of it and tore up the telegram, striving to reassure himself, as he thought that a direct and independent creature like Mabel Clarke, that a loyal and honest friend like the American girl would laugh at and despise the horrid things.

But by a mysterious coincidence, which made him secretly throb with anguish, a week passed by without a letter or note, or a single word by telegram, reaching him from New York; Vittorio passed a fortnight of complete silence between anguish and despair. Instead, a very broad and voluminous letter, under cover and registered, reached him from New York, containing a long article about his indiscretions, dated from Rome, in which it was narrated, with the most exaggerated particulars, how Miss Mabel Clarke's *fiancé* in Italy had seduced a cousin two or three years ago, how she had had a son by him, and how he had deserted her and her little one in a district of Lazio. Vittorio Lante, who in three weeks of silence had written Mabel Clarke four

letters, and sent three telegrams without obtaining a reply, dying with impatience and anxiety, and hiding it from people, felt as if a dart were passing through his heart, from side to side, felt as if all his blood were ebbing away, and he remained exhausted and bloodless, unable to live or die.

So that morning at the end of February all those whom Giovanna, the faithful servant, gradually announced, since her master, pale and taciturn, consented to receive them with an automatic nod, found a man who received them with a silent and fleeting smile, with a rare word as he listened but scarcely replied to them, when they had finished expounding their ideas and propositions, as if he had understood nothing, and perhaps had heard nothing of them. For four or five days, with a great effort of the will, Vittorio kept up appearances, driving back his anguish to the depths of his heart, knowing that profound dissimulation is necessary in the world, and that the world must see little of our joy and none of our sorrow.

That morning there filed before him a traveller for a motor-car company who wished to make him buy three cars, of forty, sixty, and eighty horse-power respectively, to be paid for, naturally, after the marriage, but consignable a month previously with, of course, a fixed contract ; a kind of tatterdemalion, all appointed, who offered him a Raphael, an authentic Raphael, for two hundred thousand lire, and who ended by asking for two francs to get something to eat ; a gentleman of high society, who lived by the sale of old pictures, tapestry, bronzes, and ivories, who took them from the antiquaries and re-sold them, gaining a little or a big commission, a friend who proposed increasing the prices, since Mahel Clarke was to pay, and that they should both divide the difference, proposing to him, in fact, that he should rob his future wife ; a *littérateur* who came to seek from him the funds to launch a review in three languages,

and who proposed to insert therein his own articles which Vittorio Lante should sign with his name ; an agent of a bankrupt exchange, known to be unable to go on 'change, who proposed some mining affairs in Africa for John Clarke to take up, offering him a stiff commission so that he should transfer these uncertain shares to his father-in-law. And, more or less, in all demands, proposals, and requests which were made to him that morning, he perceived the intention to mock and cheat him, but still more he discovered in many of them the conception that he was a man of greed, who could for more or less money deceive his wife and father-in-law, cheat and rob them, like a sponger or society thief. Even more sorrowfully than at other times, he trembled when he noticed the expression of lack of esteem in which the people in his presence held him, people who dared in his own house to propose crooked bargains, equivocal business, as they offered him his own price !

" Am I, then, dishonoured ? " he thought, with a rush of bitterness. The morning passed and afternoon came : he was alone, and for the third or fourth time in three or four hours he asked Giovanna if letters or telegrams had arrived. It was an almost convulsive demand, which he had repeated constantly for three weeks, the only demand that showed another human being the state of convulsion in which he found himself. Nothing came, nor that morning either, except the newspapers, and a letter from Donna Maria Lante from Terni, which Giovanna had at once consigned to him. He composed his face, resumed the artless, jolly expression which had been his worldly mask, went to lunch at the club, and replied to three or four friends that the marriage would certainly take place in April. He jested with everyone ; he held up his head before all, but he did not fail to observe that in questions, in compliments, in congratulations, there was a sense of hesitation, as of a slight

incredulity and a little irony. The old Duke of Althan was very cold with him ; Marco Fiore scarcely greeted him. Hurt and very nervous, he thought :

“ Am I, then, dishonoured ? ”

He returned home : there were no letters or telegrams. He went out again to Calori's fencing school, and passed an hour of violent exercise, in which he allowed to escape whatever was insupportable in his pain ; again he returned home, found nothing there, and went out to leave cards on two or three foreign ladies, whose acquaintance he had made the day before at a tea at the English Ambassadress'. He wandered through Rome, and for the third time, as if it were the way of the Cross, he repaired home, asked Giovanna from the speaking-tube if there were anything for him. She replied that there was a telephone message for him. Disillusioned, more than ever pierced by anxiety, he went upstairs, took from the landing-place the little card on which Giovanna had written the telephone message, and read :

“ A friend from America expects Don Vittorio Lante at the Grand Hotel at half-past four to take a cup of tea. Room Number Twenty-seven.”

Vittorio trembled from head to foot, like a tree shaken by the wind ; he drew out his watch convulsively. It wanted ten minutes to the appointment ; he hurled himself into a cab, trembling and controlling himself, not noticing the streets he passed, and biting his lips at every obstacle his carriage met. On at last reaching the vestibule of the Grand Hotel, he threw the No. 27 to the porter. Refusing the lift, bounding up the stairs to the first floor, he knocked at twenty-seven, while his heart seemed to leap into his throat, suffocating him. From within the clear, harmonious voice of Mabel Clarke said to him in English :

“ Come in ! ”

His face changed to a mortal pallor in her presence,

as standing in the middle of the great, bright room, full of flowers, she offered him her hand ; his too intense emotion filled his eyes with tears. He took the hand and kissed it, while his tears fell on it.

" Oh, dear, dear old boy," murmured Mabel, moved, looking at him affectionately and smiling.

He held the hand between his own, looked into his *fiancée's* eyes, and the cry, so often repressed, was from the depth of his heart :

" Mabel, I swear to you that I am an honest man."

" Do not swear, Vittorio," she replied at once, " I know it."

" Ah, they calumniated me, they defamed me, they dishonoured me. Mabel ! " he exclaimed, falling into an arm-chair, " I swear to you that they are lies, infamous lies."

" I know," she replied with a softness in her firm, clear voice, " that they are lies."

" Ah, my consoler, my friend, my delight," he said, with a sigh, taking her hands, drawing her to him, and embracing her and kissing her on her forehead, and eyes, and cheeks.

She allowed herself to be embraced and kissed, but with a gracious movement she freed herself from him, and they sat side by side on one of the large sofas, beneath a great *Musa* plant.

" Do you still love me, Mabel ? " he asked anxiously.

" I am very fond of you, dear," she replied tranquilly.

" Why have you caused me such suffering, dear, dear Mabel, in not writing or telegraphing to me ? "

" I was travelling to Rome," she explained.

" But when did you start ? " he asked, already disquieted.

" Three weeks ago, dear."

" Then you have been elsewhere ? " he continued, controlling his agitation with an effort.

"Yes, elsewhere," she rejoined with a smile, but without further explanation.

"But why didn't you warn me, dear? Why make me pass terrible days here alone in Rome, not knowing how to vent my anger and sorrow? Ah, what days!"

"I left unexpectedly, Vittorio."

"Unexpectedly?"

"I decided to come to Rome in search of you on the spur of the moment. Mammy is on the other side, only Broughton accompanied me. I am incognito, dear; no one knows that I am Mabel Clarke. I am called Miss Broughton."

She laughed shortly. He was still more disturbed, though he did not wish to show it. Confused and embarrassed, he looked at her, finding her more blooming than ever in her irresistible youth, in her face flourishing with beauty and health, in her slender figure dressed in white. Like a lover he exclaimed:

"Nothing matters now that you are here, Mabel, now that I am beside you, now that I press your dear hand, where is all my happiness."

She listened to him as formerly, bowing her head with its rebellious chestnut locks a little, as if the ardent breath of those words were caressing her face and soul. Then, suddenly, she said simply:

"Shall we have tea, Vittorio?"

"Yes, dear," he replied, enchanted with her. Just as formerly, she went to a little table where everything was ready to make tea. She accomplished quickly and gracefully the little operations, while he watched her, enchanted by that beloved presence, and by her action and words, which reminded him of, and brought to life again, his dream of love in the Engadine. Suddenly all Vittorio's ecstasy dissolved; he was again disturbed by a violent uneasiness.

"Why have you come to Rome, Mabel?" he asked, somewhat authoritatively.

"To learn the truth, Vittorio," she replied firmly, "and to tell it to you."

"To learn the truth, Mabel? Then you believed the infamies?"

"I did not believe them," she replied, shaking her head seriously.

"Did you believe that my mother was a martyr because of me, dying of hunger in her palace at Terni, mending silk stockings to let me live?" he cried, beside himself.

"I did not believe it. I went to Terni two days ago; I saw your mother, and I embraced her. She's a saint, and you are a good son."

"You went to Terni? Yet you say that you did not believe it, Mabel? How dare you say so? You also believed that I seduced Livia Lante; did you not?"

"I did not believe that; but I saw your cousin Livia four days ago at Velletri. I spoke to her, and she told me everything. You did not seduce her, and you never promised to marry her; she is sure that you do not love her."

"Oh, Mabel, Mabel, what shame for me! You went to seek the proofs of my honesty; what shame for me! You believed me a villain!" Convulsed with grief, he hid his face in his hands.

She arose; took his hands away from his face, and forced him to look at her.

"Dear, dear, don't go on so, I beg of you. I believed nothing, but I wanted to know the truth. As for us in our country, we believe only with our eyes, so I decided to look for the truth."

"I have never lied to you, Mabel," he added, a little more calmly.

"No, never; you are a brave, loyal old boy."

"You continue, then, after your personal inquiry, Mabel, to esteem and love me?"

"I continue to esteem and be fond of you."

"You continue to be mine."

"No," she replied clearly; "I do not continue to be yours."

"Do you take back your word?" he cried, amazed.

"It is you who will give me back yours," she said quietly.

"I? I?"

"You, dear. Because you are a man of honour, for no other reason, because you are a gentleman you will break off of your own accord our engagement, and we shall not marry."

Mabel spoke simply and firmly, without emotion. Moreover, her face had a seriousness and a gravity that he had never seen.

"Shall we not marry?" he exclaimed.

"No, Vittorio. We ought not to marry."

"Because of the calumnies and defamations, Mabel?"

"For none of those horrid things, my dear. We ought not to marry because we should make a mistake."

"A mistake?"

"Yes, a mistake, which later would make us so unhappy, you and I. Now, we ought not to be unhappy."

"But why? But why?" he asked, very agitatedly.

"Because I am very rich and you are very poor."

"How horrible! How horrible!" he murmured gloomily, despondently.

"*Que faire, mon cher?*" she exclaimed in French, shrugging her shoulders; "I have this money because father gave it to me, and I can't throw it away: can I? Money isn't such a bad thing. It isn't my fault if I have so much of it."

"Neither is it my fault if I am so poor," he rejoined sadly.

"Nor is it mine, dear Vittorio."

"You knew I was poor! I confessed it to you. I hid nothing from you."

"That is true," she declared at once. "I knew that: you told me loyally. I loved you and esteemed you for your loyalty. Only I made a mistake."

"You made a mistake?"

"Yes; I made a mistake in believing that a rich woman could marry a poor man without being very unhappy afterwards. It is a great mistake. I beg your pardon, Vittorio, for my mistake. You are suffering for it, and I want you to pardon me."

"Ah, but you don't suffer; it doesn't matter at all to you," he exclaimed, very bitterly.

"You deceive yourself, Vittorio," she added, with some sweetness. "I suffer as I know how to, as I can. But it is better to suffer a brief, great sorrow, than to suffer for the whole of one's life."

"But why should we suffer together, Mabel?"

"Because of the money, dear."

"I never thought of that when I loved you."

"I know that," she replied, taking his hand and pressing it, "but people don't. You have been seeking for a large dowry for some years; you wanted to make a great marriage. People in America and Italy will never believe you to be disinterested."

"But you who know and love me? You should see that I love and adore you only for yourself?"

"Even love wanes later, and not so very much later," she replied thoughtfully. "Your Italian love is so ardent and flattering; it sets very soon. Afterwards . . . I should believe people; I should believe that you had married me for my money."

"*Afterwards!* I swear to you that there should be no afterwards for me."

"Swear not. All American women who have married Europeans have been disillusioned and betrayed."

"Others ! Others !"

"They were also gentlemen, dear, who perhaps were in good faith. It is useless, we are too different ; we have other souls and temperaments. We have no luck with you Europeans, we poor, rich American women."

Obstinately she shook her head ; then she resumed slowly.

"Where should we live ? A part of the time in my country, in America. There they would deem you a dowry-hunter ; it would be, it will be, impossible to make them believe the contrary. You would feel yourself despised. Then the life is so different, in an atmosphere of distrust the life would seem to you eccentric, grotesque, unbearable ; and if I forced you to stay there you would end by hating me."

"But with us ? In this beautiful land ?"

"Here *I* should suffer, dear Vittorio. To all you Italian men and women I should always be the American woman who had made a bargain, who had given her dollars and bought a title. Principessa di Santalena ! Donna Mabel Lante della Scala ! What a lot of people would laugh on hearing the name, and would hide their smiles, because I should have a palace and a park, and would give dinners and garden-parties ; but behind my back, what sneers and criticisms, and evil speaking ! At your first betrayal how all would curse you in my country, how all would say you were right in yours, and all this because I, poor little woman, have a dowry of fifty millions, and you fifteen hundred lire a month, on which your mother must live."

She ceased, as if breathless from having made too long a speech, she who was accustomed to short, clear phrases, like all her race.

"You never thought of this in the Engadine," he interrupted.

"No, I never thought of it. Up there everything was so beautiful and simple! Love was so pure and life so easy!"

"Ah, how could you have forgotten that time, Mabel?"

"I haven't forgotten it. Afterwards I saw that nothing is simple, nothing easy—neither life, nor love, nor happiness—nothing, when there is this terrible, powerful thing, money."

"What, then, do you want from me? What have you come to seek from me?" he asked, half angrily and half sadly.

"For you to give me a proof of what you are by your birth, by your past, by your character; for you to free me from the promise of engagement, frankly and spontaneously."

"Oh, I couldn't do otherwise," he said, with a pale, ironical smile.

"You could. If you were a vile calculator, if you were a sordid, interested man you could. You have my word, and my mother's; you have my father's; you have my letters and my telegrams; you could force me to marry you."

She looked him in the eyes fixedly. He fixed hers unhesitatingly, without a tremble, and said to her in a loud voice:

"Miss Mabel Clarke, I release you and your parents from the engagement; I hold at your disposal your letters and telegrams."

Mabel Clarke grew pale, and then blushed with a rush of blood to her beautiful face; she offered her hand to Vittorio Lante.

"I knew it, darling! I am very fond of you, and shall always be fond of you."

Silent, impassive, he had performed his sacrifice in the name of his honour ; but the heroic act had consumed him. There was a long silence between them.

" I shall start back to-morrow," she said, in a low voice.

" Ah, to-morrow ! " he repeated, as if he did not quite understand.

" Will you accompany me to Naples, where I shall embark, dear ? " she asked him affectionately, but with a veil of sadness in her voice.

" I would rather not," he murmured weakly.

" You must be stronger, Vittorio."

" I have been strong," he replied, opening his arms.

" You must not ask more from me."

" You must not suffer, darling."

" I love you and suffer in loving you, Mabel," he said, simply and sadly.

" I hope that will soon end."

" Eh, not so soon, not so soon," he added, with melancholy and bitterness.

" You will return to your mother, won't you ? "

" Later on I shall go. I must go there to explain everything," he murmured.

Mabel, after having conquered him, experienced an ever broader sympathy, an ever greater pity for him. Every word in which he vainly poured forth his sorrow, the undoing, the delusion of all his hopes, struck her good and loyal heart more than all the cries of revolt which had rushed from his lips. After having conquered him, after being freed, she became his friend, his sister, loving and sad, suffering in seeing him suffer, desiring that he should suffer no more. But the man who had given all his measure, who had accomplished his great act of renunciation, could no longer be consoled by her ; she had lost the sentimental power of comforting him. But she tried again :

"Your mother expects you, Vittorio."

"Did you tell her everything?" he asked in a weak, colourless voice.

"Yes, I told her."

"Poor mamma," he murmured to himself.

"Dear, dear Vittorio, start a new life within and without yourself! Sell the old palace and the old park. Pay your debts. Take your mother away with you, and with what is left try some undertaking, create an industry, some work for yourself and others," she said energetically.

"I should require another soul, and another heart," he replied gloomily, with lowered eyes.

"Change your country and your surroundings," she suggested energetically, as if she wished to inject some will into him.

"Perhaps I ought to come to America?" he asked, with a pale, ironical smile.

"Why not? John Clarke would do everything for you."

But suddenly she bit her lips, as she saw Vittorio's contracted face become disturbed with pallor, as if under an access of anger and grief.

"Oh, thanks!" he said, with deep irony. "One thing only John Clarke could do for me, and that I have renounced. Must I come to America like a wretched seeker after work, like an emigrant? Miss Mabel, we shall separate without your understanding me."

"Perhaps," she replied humbly, "it has not been vouchsafed me to understand you."

"Would you like me to be there, Miss Mabel, when you marry the American, some American, of your race and country?" he asked, with a sarcastic smile.

"Oh, this will only happen much later," she murmured, "very much later."

"But it will happen, Miss Mabel," he insisted bitterly.

"I believe so," she said simply; "not now, not for a year. Even later."

"Why should you wait, miss?" he asked sadly, with ever greater sarcasm.

"To forget you, dear," she replied frankly.

He trembled, but restrained himself.

"You think us American women heartless, Vittorio. You will never understand us."

Worn down, he again made a vague gesture of excuse.

"On the contrary, Vittorio, I believe you will marry Livia Lante, much sooner than I shall marry an American."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"We are very poor, Livia and I. One can endure poverty when one is in love. I do not love Livia."

"Later solitude and boredom will oppress you. She is sweet and gracious. She will beautify your life."

"I could never endure poverty but on one condition, Mabel," he exclaimed suddenly, invaded by a new exaltation.

"Which?"

"With you, Mabel, with you! Ah, if only you were a poor woman with a halfpenny for a dowry, without a dress to your back, how I would dream of taking you, of carrying you away with me, to work for you, my companion, my spouse, my love, to look for work and riches for you, but with you and for you!"

Pale, absorbed, she listened to him. He drew near to her, took her hands, and spoke face to face.

"Ah, Mabel, come away, come away with me, far away, renounce your millions, renounce all your money; say to your father that you don't want a farthing, that Vittorio Lante, your husband, wishes to work and create with you and for you life and riches."

With closed eyes she vacillated in his arms, vacillated beneath the wave of that enveloping passion.

" Mabel, you alone can make of me another man, with another soul, with another heart ! Mabel, remember, remember our dreams of love in the Engadine, remember that you consented to love me up there ; you did love me, you have been my beloved, you can't forget ! Change yourself, change me ; be another woman, give yourself to love, as I let myself be taken in the great battle for you ! Change yourself, as I change myself ! Deny not the arguments of love ; be a woman as other women, as I ask to be a man in every strife however cruel. Mabel, Mabel, change yourself."

Holding her in his arms, a breath of scorching words wrapped the girl as in a fire of flame. For the first time Vittorio Lante saw on that face, so dazzling with youth and beauty, a lost expression of love and sorrow. Still, she was made for victory ; she was the stronger. Tearing herself free, she composed her face, and replied :

" Vittorio, it is impossible."

" Impossible ? "

" No soul ever changes ; at least, not for love. Each soul remains what it is."

" It is true," he replied, coldly and sadly. " The soul never changes, not even for love."

CHAPTER] XX

A STRONG, fresh wind was coming from the deep, raising the waters of the Adriatic in long waves of incomparable light green, to hurl them, as they curved, rolled, and almost curled in greenish white with a crown of the whitest foam, and fragrant with the sharp smell of the sea, on the long, straight shore of the Lido. The waves broke one after the other, almost on top of each other, on the soft, yellow sand of the beach, which became dark with ever-increasing dark weals, and stained by the swelling water as the waves gained ground. Here and there the little mounds of seaweed and marine refuse on the sand were invaded, covered, and demolished, as they became higher and lower with the suction of the waves : here and there holes and little ditches full of water were being formed. The strong, fresh wind whirled round the fashionable huts that stretched numerously in a line far along the straight beach, and whirled around the vast bathing establishment of the Lido, causing the doors of the little cabins to rattle, and the linen to flutter, which here and there had been exposed to dry : it whirled round the immense covered terrace of the *café*, causing the awnings to flap which were still lowered against the sun.

Although it was one of the last days of September and the afternoon was advancing, the sea was thronged here and there with heads of bathers, whilst the beach was full of people coming and going to and from the sea, from the cabins and the little wooden staircases and gangways. Down below on the shore, by the huts, were

children of various ages, watched over by nurses and governesses, who were entering and leaving the water, flying with little cries of joy from the tallest waves, rolling on the sand, and jumping up again in a laughing, delightful group. Rather nearer, black dots, with brightly coloured coifs, large straw hats, sailing and swimming on the pale green waves, indicated men and women who were enjoying one of the last days of summer, who were enjoying the sea with its clear waters and disturbed waves, with perfumes so exhilarating, and wind so fresh, and the great beach and soft shore. From the horizon, on the incomparable green of the Adriatic, two vessels approached in fraternal movement, following, catching up, and passing each other, but pursuing the same course. One had three sails, all yellow, of a yellow ochre, with certain strange signs of darker yellow on their background ; the other had sails of red-bronze, with designs of deep red. When they were nearer, one could see that on the yellow sails were designed a cross, nails, a crown of thorns, to wit, a reminder of the Passion of Jesus Christ ; on the other was a little Madonna of the Carmine—the *Ave Maria Stella*.

Towards four o'clock the terrace of the *café*, bathed by the sun, was empty, with its hundred little tables round which the flies buzzed ; some of the awnings were lowered, others were half raised. Slowly the scene changed. The wind became stronger and fresher from the depths ; the children decided to enter the huts to dress, as they continued their happy cries ; one by one the other bathers re-entered their cabins. The sea became deserted, only on the shore the number of persons who were promenading slowly increased, as they tried to walk on the deep sand where the feet sank. Now and then they halted to watch the sea, whose waves became higher and whiter with their rounded crests, as if the better to breathe the grand fresh air, full

of saline aroma. Now other great vessels appeared, more or less in the offing, with yellow, coppery, and maroon sails, rendered darker by sun and brine.

The scene changed on the terrace as the sun declined. All the awnings were raised, some frequenters appeared to sit by the balustrade that gives on to the beach, to take a place at the little tables along this balustrade, whence all the vastness and beauty of that admirable Lido seascape is to be viewed. The little steamers that perform the small crossing—less than a crossing, a ferry—between Venice and the island of the Lido half an hour ago had arrived almost empty, but now they were sending people continually towards the shore, people who left the motionless waters of the shining, grey lagoon, crossed the island still green with little trees, still flourishing with growing flowers and plants, and came to gaze at the free, resonant Adriatic, with its wonderful green and white waves, with a sigh of relief and a smile of greeting for the magnificent Italian sea.

Two or three tables were at first occupied; other people arrived. Then the waiters began to glide from table to table, a little bored, carrying large trays with the necessities for tea, pink and yellow *sorbettes*, drinks piled with little pieces of ice, wherein was fixed a straw. It was not a large crowd, like that of strangers of all nations in April, when they are mysteriously attired in voluptuous flattery of the Venetian spring, not the great, indigenous, Italian crowd of the month of August, that chatters and laughs at the top of its voice, the ladies dressed in white, fanning themselves, as they drink large glasses of iced beer, far too much in the German manner! It was the crowd of the end of September, a little curious and strange, mingled with foreigners who had come from Switzerland and the Italian lakes, mingled with the Italians who had come from the Alps to the plains at the end of the summer season. The crowd

round the tables was small and not chatty or noisy. To the charming, languid, sweet Venetian dialect issuing from the beautiful lips of women, here and there was united a French word, but above all was mingled the rough German talk—in the majority everywhere, as usual. The wind was now very fresh, and dull the breaking of the waves down below on the soft sand: a few promenaders went on the shore, watching the warm tints of the sunset on the horizon, while large vessels filed past with yellow-ochre sails, from which the Virgin Mary gave her blessing.

For some time Vittorio Lante remained alone at a small table in a far corner of the terrace: before him was a tall glass full of a greenish drink, exhaling a smell of peppermint, but he forgot to sip it. The keen expression of life, which had distinguished him in the Engadine, had vanished from the young man's graceful but virile face. He seemed calm, but without thoughts, and all his features appeared grosser in that thoughtless calm. His eyes glanced without vivacity, as they fixed themselves indifferently on the people and things around him; he was not sad or happy, but indifferent. He smoked a cigarette and lit another, which remained between his fingers without his bringing it to his mouth, while a thread of smoke issued from it. Suddenly someone stopped at his table, bent over him, and called him, as he greeted him in a low voice. He raised his eyes and was amazed to see Lucio Sabini standing before him.

"Dear Vittorio, you here!"

"Dear Sabini, welcome!"

They shook hands and looked at each other for a long moment, as if each wished to read in the other's face the story of the two years in which they had not seen each other. Certainly Lucio Sabini was the more deeply changed. His black hair, where up to thirty-five not a

single silver thread had appeared, now was quite streaked with white round the temples ; his face from being thin had become fleshless ; his black eyes that had been so proud seemed extinguished ; the shoulders of the tall, slender figure were a little bent, and all his physiognomy had an expression of weariness, of failing strength, of vanished energy.

" Are you alone, Vittorio ? "

" I am here alone, Sabini."

" Disengaged ? "

" Yes."

" Then I will sit a little with you."

He sat down opposite him, and became silent, as he watched the sea.

" Won't you take something, dear friend ? " asked Vittorio, with careful courtesy.

" If I must, I will take some sort of coloured water," murmured Lucio Sabini, and his long, brown, very thin hand brushed his black moustache in a familiar gesture. Again they looked at each other intensely. Lucio seemed to make an effort to begin an ordinary conversation.

" Have you been long in Venice, Vittorio ? "

" No, just a week. We have come from Vallombrosa, where we stayed till September was advanced."

" Is Vallombrosa amusing ? "

" No ; boring."

" Your wife, Donna Livia, likes it ? "

" Exactly. She likes forests with their large trees. She lived there from morning till evening."

" Is Donna Livia here ? "

" I left her for tea with some friends in Venice, and came here to pass an hour alone."

" Is she willing to leave you alone ? "

" She lets me. She knows I like my freedom . . . to do nothing with it. So she herself lets me go free, to please me."

They spoke in a low voice, bending a little over the table, looking distractedly, now at the beverages from which they had not sipped a drop, now a little to their right at the shore and the sea ; but their glances seemed to be aware of nothing. Suddenly Lucio Sabini, fixing his worn-out eyes on those of Vittorio, questioned him more brightly, with his dull voice from which all *timbre* seemed extinguished.

" Are you happy, Vittorio ? "

" I am not happy, but I am not unhappy," he replied, turning his head away, as if to hide the sudden expression of his face.

" Are you contented with that ? "

" I have no choice of anything else," replied Vittorio, with a wan smile.

" And is Donna Livia happy ? "

" She asks nothing else of life than to have me. She has me."

" Then all is well, Vittorio ? "

" Yes, for Livia."

" And for you ? "

" Oh, for me nothing can go well or ill, Sabini."

This he said with such an accent of indifference, of detachment, that it amounted more to sadness. After a slight hesitation Lucio resumed :

" Vittorio, you were ardently in love with that American girl."

" Ardently is the word," agreed Vittorio Lante, in a rather louder voice.

" How did you let her escape you ? "

" I gave her up."

" Although you loved her ? "

" Yes, although I adored her, I gave her up."

" But why ? "

" So as not to be dishonoured, Lucio. Had I married her I should have been dishonoured."

" Because of her money."

" Exactly ; because of her superfluity of money, her immense amount of money ; because of my immense poverty."

A soft veil passed before Vittorio's eyes. The other looked at him, and said :

" It hurts you, then, to talk of this ? "

" Yes, now and then it hurts me ; but the pain is always less, and always at greater intervals, Sabini. I am almost cured."

" Did you suffer much ? "

" Very much, as if I should die of it. However, I am not dead ; it seems one doesn't die of that."

" Do you think so ? " asked Lucio, waving a hand.

" I don't know," he murmured ; " I had my mother, whom I ought not to make more unhappy ; perhaps I was unworthy to conceive a lofty sorrow. Who knows ? I haven't been given either a great soul or great will. It is not my fault if I am not dead, if I am almost healed."

This time a sense of irony against himself and his own mediocrity escaped from his indifference.

" Poor Vittorio ! " said Lucio, pressing his hand across the table, " tell me everything. You can tell me everything, I can understand."

" Oh, mine isn't such an interesting story ! " exclaimed Vittorio, with a pale smile of irony ; " if you like, it is rather a stupid story. I was such a fool in the Engadine ! I went there to find a girl, neither too beautiful nor too ugly, and not very rich, who could drag my mother and myself out of our difficulties ; I went with a definite programme, a vulgar but definite programme, unromantic but definite, that of a dowry-hunter. Instead of looking for a mediocre girl, with a dowry of six or seven hundred thousand lire, like a child, like an idiot, I make straight for Mabel Clarke,

who has fifty millions. I put forward my candidature as a flirt to good purpose, and conquered all rivals. Fool, thrice a fool that I was ! Instead of keeping my presence of mind, and all my wits, I fall in love with her because she is beautiful, fresh, young, new, and of another race ; because we were free, and left free, as is the American custom, as you know quite well, so that at last the girl of fifty millions falls in love with me."

" She did love you, then ? "

" Yes, she loved me in her way," answered Vittorio, shortly.

" She suffered through you."

" She suffered less intensely, but longer, perhaps. Even in this she beat me, Lucio ! What a common story, is it not ? How could I have thought that the world and my destiny would have permitted me to marry Mabel Clarke with her fifty millions, to be the son-in-law of John Clarke, who, at his death, would have left other two hundred millions ? I ? I ? And why ? Who was I, more than another, of my country or another, of my set or another, who was I to reach to such power ? I was neither a true pleasure-seeker, nor properly vicious, nor a cynic. Seriously, I was nothing but a—calculator. I was nothing serious, my friend. If I had been in earnest as a calculator I should not have fallen in love with Mabel Clarke. What a mistake, or rather, what a *gaucherie* ! "

" You can't forget her, Vittorio," whispered Lucio, looking at him with tender eyes.

" You are wrong. I forget her more and more. Besides, have I not married Livia ? "

" Why did you make that marriage ? "

" *Que faire ?* " he exclaimed, shrugging his shoulders. " I was so sad, so broken in bone and soul, as if I had fallen from a precipice, and had been dragged out half living. I was so bored. And poor little Livia was

languishing in silence waiting for me. And did not my mother look at me with beseeching eyes every time I went to Terni? I married through sadness, fastidiousness, weakness, to make an end of everything, and, as you see, in spite of all my ardent love for Mabel Clarke I did not know how to be faithful to her for more than a year. The American girl had foreseen it—Mabel Clarke was stronger, wiser, more direct than I, and much better too. She humbled me in sending a rich gift to Livia on her wedding, and she invited us to America. Ah, how strange these women are ! ”

“ She invited you to America? She writes to you ? ”

“ Often, long letters. From the very first she wanted me to go to America to gain money with John Clarke, and she did not believe she would offend me by asking me.”

They were both silent for a moment, absorbed and concentrated. Around them people began to leave the tables, as the shadows of dusk were falling from the sky on sea and beach and the flowered island ; but they were unaware of it.

“ Besides, dear Sabini,” resumed Vittorio, with a degree of greater sarcasm, “ I am less poor than I was formerly. Then I spent too much to find the heiress with the great fortune, to live grandly, and to travel. When I announced that I was marrying Livia, Uncle Costrucci, an old clerical, was moved, and let us have, for our natural lifetime, a beautiful suite of apartments in old Rome, in via Botteghe Oscure. Mamma has come to live with us, and her cousin, Farnese, made her a present of a carriage. Ours is a marriage which has been made by public subscription ! We have our house and our carriage. Livia is so charming in her discreet *toilettes*, discreet in every fashion. I haven’t to strive as I thought, I have not even been forced to work as I

supposed. There is nothing of the heroic in me—a mediocre destiny, and a mediocre life ! ”

“ Ah, Vittorio, you still suffer,” said Lucio, in a deeply moved voice.

“ In my *amour-propre*, I confess. Think, Lucio, how I have been treated—surrounded, knocked on the head like a lamb under calumnies, defamations and vituperations, in every land where international society gathers—and how I have been unable to cuff a single one of my adversaries. Think how rivers of ink have been poured out in the papers of two worlds to defame me, and how I have been unable to spit in the face of a single one of those journalists ; think how I have been unable to defend myself or offer a fight, solely because I loved Mabel and Mabel loved me. And afterwards, Lucio, what an incurable offence to my *amour-propre*, this breaking off the marriage, which sanctions the calumnies, this breaking off . . . and how everyone laughed at me afterwards, and if they do not laugh at Livia and me now it is because we are a quiet, modest *ménage* that lives in the shade—we are an insignificant couple now.”

“ Another man, Vittorio, would never have consented to breaking off the marriage.”

“ Another ! I consented because I loved Mabel ; I loved her like a child, like a Don Quixote, with such fire and devotion as to become a hero—and I so mediocre ! Through love I renounced my every good, but of my own free will. Ah, if I had not loved her ! If I had been a cold and interested man, even under the impulse of an amorous caprice ; if I had kept my clearness of mind, even in flirting to extremes, how different everything would have been. If I had not loved her I could have fled with her ten times from the Engadine, and she would have been compromised and the marriage would have been inevitable. If I had not loved her I would not so ingenuously have allowed her to set out alone

for America ; if I had not loved her I would have provoked a duel at every defamation and reduced my defamers to silence. At the first injurious article of the American newspapers I would have gone over there to make them show cause in the law courts ; if I had not loved her I should have been able to force her to keep her engagements, and I should have obtained her by force, her and her fortune ; but I should have obtained her. I loved her, and I destroyed my happiness and my life."

With dreamy eyes, full of incurable sadness, he gazed at the Adriatic which was becoming intensely green, like an emerald, in the twilight. He added :

" Lucio, love has been my mistake ; I committed suicide because of it. But what is more laughable and grotesque, I survive my suicide."

In spite of his cold delirium, as he turned to Lucio he perceived that he had become pale, as if he were about to die ; he saw that Lucio's thin brown hand was pressing his cigarette case convulsively. Vittorio composed himself, turned towards his friend, and touching his hand lightly, said :

" How I beg your pardon ! I must have bored you so much with this tale of my woes."

Lucio Sabini bowed a denial with a vague and sad gesture of his hand, without replying ; he bowed his denial with a vague smile that vanished immediately.

" Do not think that I tell everyone how it still torments me in the depths of my soul ; no one knows anything of it ; none must know. But you went up with me to the Engadine on a summer evening, do you remember ? You were a witness of my joy up there."

" And also you, Vittorio, were my witness up there," murmured Lucio, grimly and gloomily.

Vittorio trembled and leant over the table to Lucio.

" Ah, that too is a sad story," he murmured.

"Sad do you call it, only sad?" exclaimed the other, with a great vibration of sorrow in his voice. Confused and disturbed, Vittorio in his turn stammered:

"I knew—I read."

"What did you know? What did you read?" asked Lucio Sabini in a strong, vibrant voice.

"In the papers . . . a few lines . . . I read of Miss Lilian Temple's accident," added Vittorio in a low voice.

"You mean to say Miss Lilian Temple's death, my friend," exclaimed Lucio, with a strange accent; "she is dead, my friend."

"I did not wish to pronounce the word death, my friend," Vittorio replied quietly.

Now they were alone on the terrace, on which the evening was descending. Everyone had left to take the little steamer back to Venice from the other side of the Lido. The terrace was quite deserted, and all the Lido shore, whose yellow sand remained bright beneath the evening shadows; and deserted the ample Adriatic, now of the deepest green in the evening gloom.

"She was twenty," said a weak, feeble voice, which Vittorio hardly recognised as Lucio's.

"It is very early to die."

"I ought to have died, I who am thirty-seven, and have lived double that time, I who am tired, old, and finished with everything. It was just that I should die, not she, who was twenty," said the weak voice.

"But how did the accident happen?" asked Vittorio.

"What accident?"

"The Alpine catastrophe in which the poor little girl perished."

Ah, what a horrible smile of torture contracted Lucio's livid lips!

"There was no accident, there was no Alpine catastrophe. Miss Lilian Temple killed herself."

"Killed herself?" cried Vittorio, stupefied.

" She killed herself."

" Are you sure of it ? "

" As of my life and death. She killed herself."

" Ah, how cruel ! how atrocious ! " broke in Vittorio.

" And she was only twenty," replied the feeble voice again, like a lament.

A heavy, lugubrious silence fell upon the twain, in that solitary corner of the great deserted terrace before the Adriatic.

" Would you like to read her last words, Vittorio ? " asked Lucio.

The other started and nodded. Lucio drew out from an inner pocket his pocket-book, took from it a long white envelope, and drew delicately from it a picture post card. The two friends bent forward together over that piece of paper to distinguish its design and read the words thereon. On one side the post card had the address written in slender, tall calligraphy and firm handwriting, "*à Don Lucio Sabini, Lung' Arno Serristori, Firenze.*" The postage-stamp was of the 24th of April of the previous year, and came from the Hospice of the Bernina. On the other side was a great panorama of glaciers, of lofty, terrible peaks, and printed beneath the German words, "*Gruss vom Diavolezza.*" The same slender, upright characters had written, in a corner of the card, beneath the great strip of white of the glacier in English, " For ever, my love.—Lilian." Both raised their heads and looked at each other.

" She died the next day, the 25th of April," said Lucio, holding the card in his hands and gazing at it, as if he saw it for the first time. " These are her last words. She wrote them in the Hospice of the Bernina, and posted them in the letter-box of the façade of the Hospice. Next morning she left very early for La Diavolezza ; at four o'clock in the afternoon she was dead, having fallen headlong from a lofty crevasse of the Isola Persa."

He spoke slowly, with a precise accent, that rendered even more sorrowful the expression of his words.

"Would you like to see where she died, Vittorio?" he resumed. "Look carefully."

Again, with tragic curiosity in the evening half light, the two men leant over that funereal document.

"Look carefully. This is La Diavolezza, a mountain which is climbed without great difficulty, and where is unfolded an immense panorama of glaciers and peaks. I have been there and described it to her. Look carefully; she reached as far as here, and rested only an hour in this Alpine hut. She wanted to proceed at once to the glacier here, where it is marked, the Perso Glacier, this great black moraine that cuts the glacier in two, which is called the Isola Persa—it is written beneath. Look closely; you will not discover the crevasse where she fell, where *she wished to fall*, but it is here—where she wished to fall and to die."

"But how do you know?"

"She cut the rope which fastened her to her guide with a knife."

"Who told you that?"

"The guide told me: I saw the little torn piece of cut rope. I went over all Lilian Temple's last journey," said Lucio gloomily.

Suddenly he threw himself with arms and head on the table, holding to his mouth the post card whereon were written Lilian Temple's last words murmuring with wearless sighs that rent his breast:

"Oh, my love, my love . . . at twenty."

Silent, astonished, Vittorio waited till the moment of weak anguish passed. Then he leant towards the man, whose sighs became less, and said to him:

"Lucio, pull yourself together. Let us go away." The electric lamps, which had been suddenly lit, illuminated the terrace; the waiters arrived with linen, glass,

and silver to set the tables for dinner, since foreigners and Venetians, on warm evenings, came to dine there in the open air before the sea, where one of the usual orchestras played. There was a coming and going of these waiters, and a rattling of glass and china. In dull, equal, monotonous voice, the Adriatic broke against the shores of the Lido. The wind had fallen.

"Let us go away," repeated Vittorio.

With a rapid movement Lucio started up: his eyes were red, although he had shed no tears, his face seemed feverish. Both approached the exit, crossed the theatre hall and the vestibule, and found themselves at the door. They went out into the island before the large central avenue, where the tramway runs amongst the trees, gardens, and villas. They had not uttered a single word. When once again they were in the open air before the little square where the tramway stops Lucio said shortly:

"Shall we walk across the island, Vittorio? We shall always find a steamer on the other side to take us back to Venice."

"Let us walk."

They walked in silence along the little garden in course of construction, by villas hardly finished, beneath the young trees, amidst the white electric lamps and the shadows formed between the lamps. Suddenly Lucio Sabini stopped. He leant over the fence of a garden covered with rambler roses and said in a desperate voice:

"Vittorio, I killed Lilian Temple."

"Don't say that, don't say that."

"I committed the crime, Vittorio. I killed her. It is as if I had taken her by the hand, led her up there to the Isola Persa, and pointing to the precipice had said to her—'*Throw yourself down.*' Thus am I guilty."

"Your reasonable grief blinds you, Lucio."

"No, no," he answered in his desperate voice, "I am

not blind, I am not mad. Time has passed over my sorrow : it has become vast and deep like a great, black lake which I have in the depths of my soul. I am neither mad nor blind. I exist, I live, I perform coldly and surely all the acts of life. Nevertheless, I committed a crime, in thrusting Lilian Temple to her death with my very own hands."

"But you are not an assassin, you are not a cruel man," protested Vittorio vehemently. "You could not have done it."

"That is true : I am not an assassin, I am not a cruel man, but every unconscious word of mine, every unconscious act of mine, was a mortal thrust whereby this creature of beauty and purity, whereby this gentle creature should go to her death."

His sharp, despairing voice broke in tenderness. They began to walk again, side by side.

"You loved her then, Lucio?" asked Vittorio affectionately.

"Yes, I loved her very much ; but with a sudden and violent love which made me forget my slavery, my galley, and the rough chain that oppresses me. I loved her, but I ought to have been silent and not have lost my peace and made her lose her peace. Here began my sad sin, Vittorio."

"Did she know nothing about you? Did you tell her nothing?"

"Nothing : she knew nothing ; she wished to know nothing. Thus she gave me her heart and her life. I ought to have spoken ; I ought to have told her everything. I was so madly in love. I was silent and in my silence deceived her. Ah, what a sin ! What a terrible sin was that !"

"Did no one warn her?"

"No one. Her soul was mine without a doubt or a thought, with immense certainty."

"But didn't you in all this understand the danger into which you were both running?"

"I didn't understand," replied Lucio Sabini, tragically. "I didn't understand Lilian Temple's love till after her death."

"You knew that she loved you?"

"Yes, but how many others have loved me for a fortnight or a month, afterwards to forget me!"

"Did she not tell you how much she loved you?"

"She told me a little, but I did not understand."

"But did she not show you?"

"She showed me a little, but I didn't understand. My eyes did not know how to read her soul or guess the riddle of her heart."

"But why? Why?"

"Because she was of another country, of another race; because she was another soul different from all the other souls I have known; because I had another heart. Lilian was unknown to me, and I let her die."

Slowly they reached the end of the long avenue that divides the little island and reached the shore of the lagoon, where no majestic hotels and sumptuous villas arise, but old Venetian houses of fishermen, sailors, and gondoliers. Already in the nocturnal gloom lights were to be seen flickering on the turbid waters. Once again Lucio stopped, as if speaking to himself; Vittorio stopped beside him, patiently, affectionately, pitifully.

"Oh, these Englishwomen, these Englishwomen," he said, passing his hand over his forehead. "Even if they are very young, even if they are twenty, as my poor love, as my poor Lilian, they have an interior life of singular intensity, whilst an absolute calm reigns in their faces and actions. They hide sentiments within their souls with a force, power, and ardour which would stupefy and frighten us if we could see within them for an instant. They have an absolute power over themselves and their

expressions, a surprising domination over every manifestation. These Englishwomen—Lilian, Lilian mine ! They say what they mean, not a word more, they express what they wish to express, no more ; they know how to control themselves in the most impetuous moments of life, they know how to encloister themselves when everyone else would expand, and they find their greatest pride in their spiritual isolation, apart from whatever surrounds them, whatever is happening, far away, closed in their interior life, in their kingdom, in their temple. Their heart is their temple. How often my dear Lilian was silent beside me, and I did not understand how full of things was her silence : how often she would have liked to fall into my arms, but restrained herself and merely smiled : how often she would have liked to cry and not a tear fell from her beautiful eyes ; how often I found her cold, indifferent, apart from me, and never perhaps had she been more mine than in that moment. So I understood not how she loved me, because she was of another race, strong, firm, thoughtful, taciturn, faithful ; because Lilian had another soul and all her soul escaped me."

They had now passed on to the pier, beneath its wooden roof, to take the steamer which should bring them back to Venice. But no steamer was leaving at that moment, although far off two large red lights were to be seen approaching rapidly towards the shores of the Lido. The two friends sat down on a wooden bench, in a badly lit corner, and resumed their conversation *sotto voce*, for other travellers were there, waiting with them for the steamer.

" These Englishwomen," resumed Lucio, speaking as if in a sad dream. " On a day in February there comes to my home, in Florence, Lilian's best friend, her most affectionate guardian, Miss May Ford, she who always accompanied her at St. Moritz : you remember her ?

And the good old maid stands there, quiet, imperturbable, while she asks an explanation of such a serious matter, that is, why I have deserted Lilian Temple ; and she asks me with such simplicity and indifference, almost as if it were a matter of the least importance, and my pain and sorrowful embarrassment caused her wonder. She does not defend Lilian, nor Lilian's love, but is at once content with my reasons. Not that only ! When I ask her to use her good influence to make Lilian forget me, she at once promises to do so. If I suggest that she should tell Lilian that I love her, but that I ought not, that I shall always love her, but still I ought to fly from her, Miss Ford declares that she will not give this message because it would make her worse ; and finally when I, to show her what an invincible and mortal reason prevents me from loving Lilian, tell her of my adultery, that is of my sad servitude, when I suggest to her that a lady could kill herself if I desert her for Lilian ; coldly, without protesting, she agrees to bear this embassy of death. Do you understand, Vittorio ? Miss May is tenderly fond of Lilian, knows, perhaps, that Lilian loves me deeply, knows, perhaps, that Lilian will not forget me, that she will never console herself for my desertion, yet through reserve, correctness, moderation, through that proud habit of sentimental modesty, that habit of proud and noble silence which these Englishwomen have, so as not to humiliate me or herself, so as not to humiliate her friend, to conceal from herself, from me, and all whatever there was exalting and agonising in our drama of love, this Englishwoman says nothing to me and to Lilian ; only a few—very few—words, the least number of words possible, a single phrase, the one necessary, which she had asked from me to take back to her, and she takes back this single phrase—and it was an embassy of death ! ”

“ And did not Miss Ford even know Lilian's heart

and of her love?" murmured Vittorio sadly; "did they confide little or nothing to each other, through respect and modesty?"

"Not even Miss Ford understood. One day in April Lilian disappeared from her home in London. She left not a letter or a note for her father; she did not write to Miss Ford, who at that moment was in Somersetshire—nothing, she disappeared. After ten days, in which Lilian's father placed an advertisement every day in the *Times* in search of her, to get her to return, the news of her death arrived."

"Probably not even her family understood that it was a question of suicide."

"Yes," murmured Lucio Sabini in a thin voice, "they caused it to be said that it was an accident: perhaps they believed it was an accident."

There was a short silence.

"In my post card, Vittorio, you read but two words, which could be a sorrowful farewell, a sad and tender remembrance. She covered with modesty and silence her passion and her death."

The little steamer was already at the pier, the gangway had been thrown across, fifteen or twenty passengers crossed it and passed into the boat. They scattered here and there on benches along the steamer's sides, which set off again immediately. Lucio and Vittorio went and sat in the front of the boat, at the prow, receiving in their faces the fresh evening breeze, no longer the strong wind of the day which for so many hours had blown from the Adriatic on the shores of the Lido, but the little wind of the lagoon which scarcely ruffled the blackish waters, a breeze that blew from the Canal of the Giudecca and rendered more charming the Venetian evening. With even movement the little steamer threaded its way, cleaving the almost motionless waters; making for the brown, fragrant mass, in the evening

light, of the Venetian gardens. Below a bright clear light was spreading itself over the city and waters. Towards San Marco and the Grand Canal the light was completely white, while other lights from palaces, houses, steamers, and gondolas waved and scintillated everywhere, far and near, throwing soft streaks of light and flying gleams over the waters. Silent and tired the two friends remained seated, almost as if they were unaware of the movement, so regular was the going of the little boat ; and they were unaware of sounds, as everything around them was peace and shadow. Venice flashed with light that brightened the shadows of the lagoon, the houses, and the sky, and she seemed surrounded by a starry aureole ; but they did not even look at the majestic spectacle, as if in the desolation of their souls neither beauty nor poesy of things could attract them. The steamer bent to the right to the stopping-place at the gardens : a louder and duller noise spoke of their arrival, the gangway was thrown across to the pier ; a few embarked for Venice, but no one got off. The steamer drew farther away noisily, and resumed its course in the middle of the lagoon.

" Now I am going to find my accomplice," said Lucio in a dry voice.

" Accomplice ? "

" Exactly. Beatrice Herz strangely helped me to kill Lilian," added Lucio, with a sneer in the gloom.

" Is she here in Venice ? "

" Of course ! How could my accomplice be elsewhere ? Where I go, she goes ; where she goes, I follow. We are inseparable, dearest Victor. Oh, it is touching ! "

And a stridulous laugh of irony escaped him.

" Did she know all ? " asked Vittorio in a low voice.

" From the first moment," resumed Lucio in a voice become dry and hard. " When I separated myself from Lilian, enamoured as I was, wildly in love, in fact, I had

a mad hope, I believed in a generous madness, and told Beatrice Herz everything. Was she not at bottom a woman of heart? Had she not suffered atrociously for love? Had she not a very tender attachment for me? I believed in the superiority of her mind and her magnanimity; I asked for an heroic deed. I had loved and served her for ten years; I had given her my youth, and consumed my most beautiful hours and strength for her; I asked her to dismiss me as a good, loving, and true servant, who had accomplished his cycle of servitude, and at last wished to be free. Humbly and ardently I begged her, with tears in my eyes, turning to her as to a sacred image, to perform the miracle, to give me liberty, to allow me yet to live some years of good and happiness—the few that remained to me for love.”

“Well?” asked Vittorio, with sad curiosity.

“I believed Beatrice Herz to be a heroine, capable of a great proof of altruism; I believed her capable of a sentimental miracle. On the contrary, she is a mean little woman, a wretched, egotistical creature, a puppet without thought or heart, in whom my love and my illusion had placed something of the sublime. She is nothing. She refused precisely; she was as arid as pumice-stone; she had not a moment’s pity or a single trace of emotion. She sees nothing but herself and her social interests. Instead of giving me my freedom she abandoned herself to such scenes of jealousy, now ferocious, now trivial, from which I escaped each time worn out and nauseated.”

“Had you never the strength to break with her?”

“I hadn’t the strength,” added Lucio sharply. “Of recent years she has threatened to kill herself when I spoke of leaving her. I always believed her. When it was a question of Lilian her threats became even more violent; twice I had to snatch from her hands a little revolver. But it was really nothing, Vittorie! It

wasn't true ! I was deceived in the first place, and was deceived afterwards. Beatrice Herz never meant to kill herself for me. I have lived ten years with this woman, and she has succeeded in deceiving me. She is not the sort of woman to kill herself. Even in this I have been disillusioned about her. She is a paltry little woman, nothing else."

" Still she loved you ; she confronted dangers for you ; she compromised herself and lost her name for you."

" Yes, yes, yes ! But adultery with all its waste and lies, adultery with all its corruptions, this adultery prolonged to the boredom and disgust of both, only for womanly vanity, the great vanity of not being deserted, has conquered all her pride."

" You reproach her with her sin ! "

" I reproach myself as well as her. I reproach myself as well as her for having sent Lilian Temple to her death."

" Beatrice did not know."

" Beatrice did not deserve to," exclaimed Lucio, again becoming exalted. " She deserved no sacrifice, neither mine nor Lilian's—I keep telling her that."

" You tell her that ! "

" Always. Our life is a hell," added Lucio gloomily.

" But doesn't Beatrice try with sweetness . . ."

" Sweetness ? Don't you know that she is jealous of my poor Lilian, of my poor dead one ? Don't you know that she still makes scenes of jealousy ? "

" Oh ! "

" It is so. When I read in the papers the dread news, when I read Lilian's poor, sweet, last words from up there, and understood that she had killed herself, like one possessed I set off by night for the Engadine. Ah, Vittorio, Vittorio, that second journey to ascend there from Chiavenna, what atrocious anxiety all that journey which I made alone, to the Maloja, to St. Moritz, to the

Bernina, in a time of perfect solitude, with the snow hardly melted, with St. Moritz still shut up as if dead. The roads were still difficult, as everywhere I followed step for step the tracks of my poor little one who had gone up there, who had lovingly and piously visited all the places where we had been together—step for step after Lilian's tracks until one night I slept in the house of the guide who had seen her die ; the man's eyes were full of tears as he told me of her death. Well, when I, full of horror and sorrow, pierced by remorse, unconsolated and unconsolable, came away, whatever do you think Beatrice Herz did ? She came to meet me in the Engadine, to snatch me back. She said so—just to snatch me back. I found her in the inn at Chiavenna, whence she was hurrying to ascend to the Engadine. I found her there, and instead of weeping with me, instead of asking pardon of God, she acted a scene of jealousy, and insulted the dead and me."

" Oh, how horrible ! "

" Horrible ! For that matter I told her a great and simple truth, which made her rave, and always makes her rave ; so I repeat it to her."

" What was that ? "

" That she had loved me ten years, and did not know how to die for me, and that Lilian Temple had loved me one month and had died for me."

" She must suffer atrociously from all this ? "

" Atrociously. I hate Beatrice Herz, and she hates me."

" Yet you remain together ? "

" Always. All our lives. Only death, longed-for death, will free us," said Lucio with a sigh.

They gradually drew near to the pier of San Marco ; the lagoon was full of gondolas, white and red lights caught the steamer and showed up faces.

" Listen, Vittorio," said Lucio, placing a hand tenderly on his friend's arm, " your love adventure has caused

you to suffer much ; but to-morrow you will be healed, because you have no remorse, because you have accomplished a lofty duty of honour in destroying your happiness ; but you have no remorse. Create none, Vittorio. When at last the beautiful, dazzling figure of Mabel Clarke has vanished from your spirit, love your wife, who is good and sweet, who has been humble and patient, who is fond of you, and attends your good. Love her, not another woman ; love her, and never the woman of another. Vittorio, don't be lost as I am lost ; don't throw to the monster adultery—your flesh, and senses, and heart. Don't create for yourself remorse which will render your life a place of torment as it is for me."

They reached the Riva degli Schiavoni, the waters were astir with gondolas, and the *Riva* with people, and full of light and bustle. They went ashore together. They stood silently for a few moments before separating, while around them life was humming, though pale and exhausted they were unaware of it.

"Do you remember Chassellas ? " asked Lucio, with singular sweetness.

"Yes, I remember it. I went there with Mabel," replied the other, with repressed emotion.

"Do you know the little Engadine cemetery near there ? "

"I know it, we gathered flowers there one day, Mabel and I."

"Lilian is buried there ; not far from poor Massimo Granata. I too shall sleep there one day ; the soonest possible, Vittorio."

Vittorio, pale and exhausted, looked at him.

"I long to die," said Lucio Sabini.

They said nothing more, but separated.

PRINTED BY
WILLIAM BRENDON AND SON, LTD.
PLYMOUTH, ENGLAND

